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# THE GOSPEL GUIDE;

OR,

THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS.

EXHIBITED WITH THE DESIGN OF REMOVING THE NUMEROUS  
OBSTACLES, DIFFICULTIES, AND OBJECTIONS WHICH  
ENTER THE SINNER'S MIND, AND PREVENT THE  
OBTAINING OF PEACE WITH GOD.

BY

THOMAS HUGHES MILNER

Editor of 'The Evangelist,' etc.,  
EDINBURGH.



'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'

*The Lord Jesus.*

EDINBURGH:

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## INTRODUCTION.

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A LITTLE treatise exhibiting the truth as it is in Jesus, so as to remove the numerous obstacles, difficulties, and objections which enter the sinner's mind, and prevent the enjoyment of peace with God, has long appeared to us to be very greatly wanted. The design of this little work is to supply that want. If, then, it should be honoured of God in leading the careless, the undecided, the christless, the perplexed, the burdened, the doubting, or the anxious sinner to the saving knowledge of Him whom to know is life eternal, our object shall be gained. In order that it may, as far as possible, accomplish the end desired, we beg to suggest,

FIRST—to *the Christian reader*, that should he, upon perusal of the Gospel Guide, think that it is fitted under the blessing of God to lead the sinner to the Saviour, he recommend it and employ it to the full extent of his influence and power. To facilitate this important co-operation in giving the Guide an extensive circulation, it is published at a price that puts it within the reach of all, and espe-



cially of Christians who may desire to furnish their unconverted friends and neighbours with a book exhibiting appropriately to their varied cases that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation.

SECOND—to the *inquiring reader*, we say, for you expressly, dear friend, this little work is written. Its design is to guide you into the knowledge and belief of the gospel of Christ—the enjoyment of peace with Jehovah—the assurance of the remission of your sins—of present and eternal safety—and the possession of a sure hope of everlasting felicity and glory. With a design so exalted as this we may well call upon you to give us such a hearing as will afford you the benefit of the truths here written for your guidance. You know, dear reader, that the same thing may be done either properly or improperly. As in every thing else, so is it in reading a book. However well calculated the truth read may be to profit you, you may so read it as to derive no advantage from it whatever. Allow us, then, to press upon your attention the following suggestions:—

1. *Read carefully, deliberately, though!fully.* Careless, inattentive reading is always profitless and often dangerous, especially when the subject is important and demands action and decision.

2. *Read seriously.* To consider the most solemn realities to which your attention can possibly be invited without the deepest seriousness, is, to say the least of it, unbecoming and imprudent.

3. *Read humbly, willingly, teachably.* We are taught alike by reason, experience, and revelation,

that child-like docility is essential to the learning of any description of truth. How can he who is too proud to submit to be taught, ever learn? What person can ever be taught that is too wise in his own conceits to condescend to receive instruction? Does not the apostolic testimony confirm that of history, that the world by its wisdom—its philosophising—knew not God? And does not the heavenly Teacher tell us that God reveals to babes—teachable, humble learners—what he hides from the wise and prudent, the self-conceited and the proud in intellect? And does not reason ask, how can it be otherwise? Do then, dear reader, condescend to the low estate of a scholar, that you may be made wise unto salvation. You may, by assuming the position of the critic and the reviewer, discover the writer's defects, but you shall overlook the saving truth, and leave your soul unsaved.

4. *Read believingly and dependently.* We say read believingly, because to read the truth and disbelieve it is to render yourself proof against it; and we say, read dependently, not on the writer, but on God, because it is certain he will not fail to render you every spiritual and mental aid which you require.

5. *Read intelligently and scripturally.* Take nothing of ours for granted. Believe nothing merely because we say it. Exercise your judgment in regard to every statement we advance. Make the testimony of the divine Spirit your standard of appeal. We do pray you to try our statements by that infallible rule. Thus shall your faith rest in God, not in man.

6. *Read opportunely and repeatedly.* Take the first time and place of appropriate leisure; as, for

example, the first Lord's day. Devote it to the purpose. Read alone. Pass no statement without fully understanding it. If the meaning or truth does not appear on the first reading, read the passage again, and so also if the truth should escape your memory. Do so especially if you have any difficulty on the subject treated of. And—

7. *Read with proper design and personal application.* That is, keep before you what you want to get at in reading the Guide; keep constantly in mind that your object is the attaining of peace with God—the salvation of your soul—the assurance of your eternal well-being; and with this in view apply the truth to yourself, not to your neighbour. Read as if you were the only sinner to be saved, and as if the good news were addressed to no other but yourself.

It will give us pleasure to receive from any quarter information of the usefulness of the Guide, or suggestions relative to improvements of which it may be susceptible. And we are the servant of all in Jesus,

THOMAS HUGHES MILNER.

EDINBURGH, *December*, 1852.

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# THE GOSPEL GUIDE.

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## THERE IS TIME ENOUGH.

THIS objection, dear reader, assumes that you have not only a sufficiency of time to prepare for eternity, but that you may rest assured of having, notwithstanding all that you have misspent, far more than a sufficiency. If it were made as signifying that there is merely time enough, it would then imply the conviction that there is no time to lose, and that immediate decision is necessary. But, as every one knows, this is not the idea generally entertained when it is said, there is time enough. The ordinary argument of the objection is—there is more than enough of time, and therefore there is no need for me being now concerned about my salvation. I am young as yet—my health is good—I have many years to live—and it shall be quite sufficient time for me to think of eternity after I have enjoyed some of the good things of this life, and am nearer the confines of man's allotted years. Such is the general scope and import of the objection.

Now, we apprehend that a few questions cannot fail to dispel the fatal illusion which overshadows this fancy, so far as it concerns those who will give the matter the slightest consideration. Then, reader, what reason have you for supposing that you have superabundant time for your salvation? What proof have you that there is a moment more time for you than you require? So far from being assured of this, you know that you cannot promise yourself a single hour beyond the immediate present. Can you deny that ere another sunrise your doom may be for

ever sealed? Can you guard yourself against one of the thousand unseen accidents of life? Are you not conscious that, in a moment hence, disease may prostrate your physical energies—or that your reason may be taken from you—or that death itself, without any warning whatever, may instantly lead you beyond the reach of mercy? Yet, although you know all this, and, consequently, are aware that you cannot reckon upon another hour of the future in which to secure your salvation, you say, let me alone—there is time enough!

If you were but to glance at the fearfulness of your position under the influence of this objection—if you were but for a moment to realize your danger through it—you would stand appalled at your desperate foolishness in ever having listened to it for a single hour. Take an illustration of the infatuation which it manifests. Suppose it to be necessary for your happiness, and interests in general, that you leave this country for a distant part of the world—that you have indispensable preparations to make—that you have but a short and uncertain period given you in which to make them—and that you are aware of your liability to be called away at any time without a moment's warning. Well, would you not regard it as altogether preposterous and madman-like for you to bestow all your attention on things quite foreign to your great enterprise—leave yourself utterly unprepared for the call that might reach you in a second of time—and excuse yourself after all by the unmasked delusion, that there is time enough? You would certainly regard this course as the extreme of folly. Yet, you must see that this is wisdom compared with the folly of leaving the vast interests of the soul in jeopardy, under the unsanctioned fallacy that there is time enough to decide in regard to them.

Beware, then, dear reader, of delay. Remember that the present alone is yours; the past you cannot recall; the future you may realize only in eternity. Remember that one hour's delay may be as fatal as that of a life-time. Let the present, then, be the period of your decision, your conversion, your salvation. Why delay to be saved till to-morrow, when there is no to-morrow promised you, and

when there is no to-morrow in the offer of mercy. 'Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation.' Now would the holy Spirit have you convinced of sin—now would the Saviour have you throw yourself into his Mediatorial arms, and rest on his propitiatory sacrifice—and now would the Father have you justified and accepted in the Beloved. Beware, then, O sinner, of another hour's delay, lest it be said of you, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.'

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### A MORE CONVENIENT SEASON.

IN what respect, dear reader, can it be that any future period shall be more convenient for your conversion to God than the present? What is it that is to make a future season a more convenient one? Can you assure yourself that a time shall ever arrive when you shall have better opportunity, more leisure, and greater inclination to investigate and receive the truth, and be saved, than you now have? Have you any guarantee whatever that the business and pleasures of this life will make fewer demands upon you than they do at present? If you cannot guarantee this, it is at your peril to defer the consideration of your spiritual welfare till a more convenient season; and full well do you know that you cannot guarantee the coming of any such period. You have not a single atom of a foundation on which to rest the presumptuous thought. Has God not already given you a sufficiently convenient season? Dare you tell him that he has not? The truth is, that you have had season upon season, and each of them more than enough in respect of convenience; and if they have not been so convenient as they might have been, who but yourself has rendered them inconvenient? Have you not found convenient seasons, or made them so, if they were not, for all the trifles of time? You know that you have. Yet you have not time to be saved! And



it is inconvenient for you to receive forgiveness from your God! O, how inconsistent!

There can be no doubt that this objection is, in the language of inspiration, 'a refuge of lies.' It assumes that God is to subject himself to the sinful will of man; that the Divine grace is to wait on for the gratification of the sinner's wayward caprice; that mercy is to be held out till the sinner thinks it convenient to accept it; that God will not only lengthen out present opportunities, but augment them to a still greater extent. Vain, vain assumption!

But it may be objected, that there are many little pleasures which would undoubtedly be lost by giving immediate attention to spiritual things; or again, that friends would oppose the adoption and profession of the gospel and its requirements; or again, that to do so would seriously interfere with business arrangements and prospects, and therefore that it is but reasonable to put off till a more convenient season. It is true, dear reader, that you may wait, if you please, for a more convenient season; but it does not follow that, because you wait for it, such a period shall ever arrive. We beg you here to observe, that it is not promised you that religious decision shall not interfere with your worldly pleasures, connexions, and business. God holds out no such promise to you; and if you wait for it, you wait for what is altogether unguaranteed. Nay, so far from being assured of having to suffer no inconvenience on account of the Gospel, you are expressly told to prepare for it. It is set before you as one of the first items of christian discipleship; and in view of this you are called upon to decide for or against it. Your waiting, therefore, for a convenient season, is a distinct and practical decision on your part against the Gospel.

If you have any doubt as to the correctness of this representation of the matter, the following passages will settle it: Matt. xvi. 24, 'If any man,' says Jesus, 'will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me;' Luke xiv. 27, 'Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple;' Matt. x. 37, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of

me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.' From these declarations it is most manifest that no such convenient season for receiving the Gospel, as you have imagined, is to be expected. You are expressly informed of the very opposite. The choice is set before you; and you are called upon to decide either for or against. The terms are unmistakeably plain; and if you go wrong, you do it of yourself, and that knowingly and wilfully.

Do not, then, delude yourself under the fabulous supposition that a more convenient season than the present for receiving the Gospel shall ever come. The thing is an impossibility—it is all a delusion. The great alternative lies before you, awaiting your decision now. And what do you gain by delay? You keep yourself in a state of perpetually recurring apprehension—you render yourself vastly less capable of attending properly to the ordinary duties and engagements of life than you would be if you were living under the power of the truth—you remain in a state in which you cannot at all fulfil the higher duties which you owe to your fellow-men—you perpetuate the highest robbery which you can commit against God—you rob yourself of the peace, and joy, and hope of religion—you stand exposed to the risk of becoming steeled to the power of the gospel should life be spared you, and of immediately falling into perdition should it not. Boast not that you will manage to escape this fate. If you procrastinate you cannot avoid it. Day by day the pleasures of the world will ingratiate themselves more closely into your affections—its cares will gather more thickly around you—your sins will so steal upon you that they will become the very companions of your being, and the very habits of your nature—and then, a change of course, however evidently necessary it may appear in order to your salvation, as you near the brink of the grave, you shall find to be all but impossible.

O then, sinner, be persuaded to surrender the delusion of waiting for a more convenient season in which to decide for eternity. Consider that the Gospel terms can never be altered—that they can never be rendered more easy.

Consider that no unreasonable demand is made upon you. Consider that the Gospel gives you infinitely more than a return for whatever sacrifices it requires you to make. If it brings temporal disadvantages, it rewards a hundredfold in spiritual treasures. If it takes away your trust from uncertain riches, it saves you from all their attendant sorrows and disappointments—it gives you the greater gain of godliness with contentment, and places your hopes where they cannot be disappointed. If it deprives you of earthly friends, it gives you divine. It withholds nothing that is necessary—nothing that is good. Be persuaded, then, at once to yield to its precepts: ‘Seek *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you;’ ‘Seek ye the Lord *while he may be found*, call ye upon him while he is near.’

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### I HAVE NOT MADE UP MY MIND.

Is this, dear reader, an excuse for your non-decision for Christ which you can present to God? God knows that you are making it. Now, will he allow it? will he consider it sufficient? Your conscience tells you that he will allow it only if it is really valid. Then, is it so? You must see that it implies that you are now taking the proper steps by which you shall become decided. Now, is that really true in your case? Are you now, with becoming seriousness and anxiety, making such investigations as the all-important question of your eternal salvation demands? or, are you not rather trifling with the great and solemn subject? Have you not been giving it as little attention as if it were a mere bagatelle—a thing of no moment—a thing that may be deferred as often as fancy dictates? If so, we answer, No wonder that your mind is not made up. We ask, When shall it be made up at this rate? Are you nearer decision now than you were a year ago? or five years ago? or, it may be, twenty years past! No! And we tell you faithfully, that in this way

you will never decide for Christ. If you do not, with honesty of intention, and determined resolution, give the momentous question of salvation more earnest heed than you have been doing, your decision shall only take place in hell. There you shall be decided—there you shall believe and tremble, in the consciousness of having neglected the great salvation which God in his love had provided for you, and of having trifled away the precious term of opportunity which he had lengthened out to you. Let us, then, appeal to your conscience. Can you face God with the excuse that you have not made up your mind? God knows that you dare not. You know that the unanswerable reply would be, Why have you not made up your mind? What has hindered you? Have you not yourself to blame solely for your non-decision? Why, then, are you undecided?

Should not the question of salvation take precedence of every other? Is there any subject that ought to go before it? Is it not a fearful thing to stand charged by God, as you do, as a rebel against him? And is it not astounding that, when he proclaims to you a way of escape, by himself provided, that you should remain undecided, if not indifferent to his clemency! You may tell us that you have little or no time; but how have you time for other matters—things not for a second to be compared with this? Is it not strange that you have time for the business of a day, and not for that of eternity! And is it not more strange still, that you give your leisure hours to amusement and frivolity, while the great alternative of salvation awaits your decision.

But taking your own statement, that your mind is not made up, what then? Is it to continue so? Why should it? The fact that it is not settled, is the very reason why you should now proceed to have it settled. Now, here let us advise you. Go into the matter as its superlative importance merits. Act reasonably in it. Look at it as the great question of your life—the question that involves the turning point of your destiny. And thus looking at it, take it up with that serious determination which ought to characterise a rational being in settling the greatest question which, so far as he himself is concerned, he shall ever

be called upon to decide. Is it not reasonable to expect that an intelligent being in your position would be bowed down, if not overpowered, with the profoundest sense of the terrible responsibility which now rests upon you? Should we not expect you to be pressing forward, with soul-thrilling anxiety, to the moment when your spirit might repose on the settlement of this question of questions? Thus we should expect of you—thus the angels and hierarchies of heaven expect of you—and thus God himself expects of you.

But mark, while we say so deliberately, we advocate no fanaticism—nothing that would dethrone reason, and make religious decision a mere frenzy of feeling, impulse, and excitement. We advocate no decision which is not the result of calm deliberation and Scripture enlightenment; and we want no excitement, no impulse, no feeling, that does not arise from the heartfelt conviction of the truth. But this we do say—take a full, true, and deliberate survey of your position, as a responsible, sinful being, who is offered by God a glorious alternative, and is called by him to decide upon it. Do so, and proceed onward to the point of decision. Begin now, and stop not nor delay till you are a saved soul in Christ. Let there be no further procrastination in commencing, and no interruption after having commenced. Rest not till you are decided—not till you are saved.

Why should you act rationally on every question except the chief one, and act in regard to it like a fool or a madman? Take warning, dear reader—do take warning. Your sand-glass is running out! Your day of grace is passing! More than your first and second periods of grace may have passed away already, and shortly may the third, the unrecallable command, go forth—'Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground!' Perhaps you think that God is so merciful that he will certainly spare you till you repent; but do you not see thousands around you cut down in their impenitence? and does the quotation just made not remind you, that it is no want of mercy in God to remove a persistent cumberer from the ground, in order that his place may be better occupied?

Remember, if instead of proceeding at once, and in earnest, to make up your mind, you continue as you have been doing, you must necessarily become one of that fearful class described by the apostle, who are 'ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.'

---

## I HAVE NO FEAR.

THE absence of fear is no proof of safety. Though you have no fear, dear reader, it does not follow that you are free from danger. Want of concern may prove quite the reverse. Want of fear may only show that you are asleep in the midst of danger, and, consequently, that your danger is all the greater from your insensibility to it. Suppose two persons on board a ship at sea, and it is discovered that the vessel is on fire. The alarm is raised; but one of these two individuals is in a profound sleep, and is quite insensible to the havoc around, and the impending doom. But is he safe, because he has no fear? Nay; for his jeopardy is a thousand times greater than if he were in anxious suspense; and his destruction is certain, if he awake not to a sense of his danger. Absence of fear, therefore, is no guarantee of safety. Its absence does not prove that you are safe—it proves the very reverse.

But, perchance, you say that you are not asleep, as we have supposed this man to be. Perhaps you are not asleep like him exactly; but, dear reader, asleep you are if you are not to your knowledge saved, and yet are not apprehensive of danger in the approach of eternity. True, you may be awake to many things—to the world, to business, to pleasure; but as regards your soul, as regards God, as regards salvation, as regards eternity, you are asleep, if you have no fear, and are not saved already. Is not this, in fact, your boast? Do you not say, I have no fear? and does not this of itself prove that you are asleep? It does; for if you were awake to a sense of your relation

to God, of the state of your soul, and of the multitude of your sins—of the approach of death, and of the eternity, and the judgment, and the awards beyond—no longer would you say, I have no fear. It would be a lie if you did say so. You cannot seriously reflect upon these solemn realities, and not tremble at the thoughts they suggest. Triumph not that they have not yet made you shudder with fear. As we have already said, this is no proof of safety. Believe it, the time is not far off when these dread verities shall cause your defiant spirit to cower in dismay. Ah, reader, forget not that it is written in the sure word of prophecy, 'When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.'

If the thought suggest itself that you shall escape, prepare to answer—how? Say, how shall you manage to evade the detection of him to whom all things are naked and open? Have not the words of one of old suggested to you that it is impossible for you to escape the omniscient God? Do they not lead you to ask, 'Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.'

One day, reader, the terrors of the Lord shall burst upon you, and fill your guilty soul with horrible dismay, unless you timeously take warning, and shelter yourself beneath the protectorate of him who is 'as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.' Dream not, then, O reader, of security in view of such fearful danger. Deceive not yourself by imagining that, because you have no fear now, you have nothing to apprehend hereafter. Think of your position before God—think of his justice and your unrighteousness—of his law and your transgressions—of

his holiness and your sinfulness—think, we say, of these things, and think of them in all their tremendous and eternal importance, and soon must the false peace of which you boast leave you in utter dismay.

But when conscience has been heard, and its verdict given against you, and you feel yourself to be under the ban of the law of heaven, think of the law-fulfilling Jesus—think of him bearing its curse for you—think of his peace-speaking blood, and the peace which it whispers to you—think of him dying to ‘deliver those who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage,’ and of him having thus died to deliver you.

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## I AM NOT OPPOSED TO RELIGION.

WHAT, dear reader, though you are not opposed to religion, if you are yourself irreligious? Can your supposed neutrality save you? Does it show you to be in either a better, a safer, or a more consistent position than the infidel or the blasphemer? You acknowledge the truth of religion, yet you treat it as if it were all a lie! Your sense of the verity of religion leads you to feel and express yourself friendly toward it, yet your conduct is exactly such as it would be if you had no faith or kindly feeling in regard to it whatever. Now, what is this but the greatest possible inconsistency? You know, feel, and allow, that religion is infinitely worthy of your most earnest consideration, and your unreserved adhesion, and notwithstanding you deny it both! Now, we think that infidelity is not less consistent than this. We can understand why an infidel remains indifferent to the claims of religion; for his indifference is consistent with his professed views. But with you it is quite the reverse. We cannot name a more indefensible and inconsistent position than yours. According to your own confession, you know to do good, but you do it not. You appreciate the right,



yet you practise the wrong. Now say, is this argument, that you are not opposed to religion, a good defence? Would it pass muster at any earthly bar? No; it would bring upon your head a double weight of condemnation. So, dear reader, shall it do for you, if you attempt to plead it at the bar of God.

But let us see if there is any truth in this objection of yours. Is it really true that you are not opposed to religion? Are you not living in neglect of religion? Are you not living without God and without Christ? Yes, you are; and still, you are not opposed to religion! In such a position, you cannot but be opposed to it. Do you suppose that it is necessary, to constitute you an opponent of religion, that you publicly denounce, revile, and obstruct it? If so, it is quite a mistake. Do you not know that, like every man on earth, you carry with you an influence wherever you go and are known? There is not an hour you live—there is not an action you perform—that does not bear an influence for good or bad on all with whom you come in contact. You forget that it is written, ‘No man liveth to himself.’ Now, if you are practically irreligious—if you act toward religion as if it were false or unworthy of supreme attention, you necessarily bear about with you a deadly influence on others, in relation to their eternal interests. You thus cannot tell how many precious souls you have already influenced for evil. There may already be spirits among the lost through your irreligion. You know that it is habitual to man to regulate himself by the conduct of others. How many of those with whom you have had intercourse, or of those whom you do not know, but who know you, may have been led to argue thus from your conduct:—There is So-and-so, a prudent, sensible, far-seeing, respectable person, quite indifferent to religion; and if he is so unconcerned, surely I may let religion alone, for the present at any rate. Thus, by your example, unknown to yourself, are sinners around you led on in a course of sin and fatality. Yet you think that you are not opposed to religion. Ah! vain thought! If you see it not sooner, the day of death shall make it but too plain, that you have all along been deluding yourself in suppos-

ing that, in your present position, you are not opposed to religion.

'He that is not with me is against me,' said the Saviour. So, dear reader, is it with you. You are, at this moment, either for Christ or against him. One or other you must be. There is no neutral position which you can occupy. There are but two spiritual kingdoms—God's and Satan's—and you are a subject either of the one or the other. If you have not been converted from Satan's kingdom into that of God, you are Satan's subject. There are but two spiritual fathers—God and the Devil; and if you have not become a child of God 'by faith in Christ Jesus,' you are still of your father the Devil. There are but two spiritual masters—Christ and Belial; and if you have not yielded yourself up to the leadership of Jesus, the wicked one is your master. 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.'

See, then, that the idea of your not being opposed to religion, while living destitute of it, and in defiance of its sacred requirements, is an awful delusion. See this, and strike the alternative. For Christ, or against him, is your question—your present, and your chiefest question. Remember that, if religion is any thing, it is paramount to every thing. 'If Jehovah be God, follow him.' What reason or propriety is there in any other course? Ah, reader, think of the ingratitude of your past procedure. Wandering prodigal as you have been, the love of God has ever rested upon you! To bring you back to God, the blessed Redeemer came, and lived, and suffered, and died for you. Yet, though known to you, you have hitherto slighted the love of your God, and treated him with the coldest indifference, who gave himself for you. Why such ingratitude?

## RELIGION IS SO GLOOMY.

RELIGION, dear reader, is not the gloomy, joyless thing which you imagine. Instead of being opposed to happiness, there is nothing so perfectly conducive to it as religion. Indeed, you cannot be truly happy till you are truly religious. A very few remarks may show you that this is true. In the first place, consider, that *religion is opposed only to what is wrong*. It objects to nothing that is right. It finds fault with nothing but what is sinful. It prohibits no enjoyment but 'the pleasures of sin.' Now, when you consider that it is sin that is the cause of all unhappiness, it must appear to you that unhappiness must flow from all sinful pleasures; and, therefore, that when religion prohibits them, it aims at the prevention of unhappiness, and not of happiness. Does conscience not tell you, that the happiness derived from sinful enjoyments is more than counterbalanced by the sting which accompanies them? Have you not often said, I wish I had refrained from them? Well, then, is religion opposed to happiness when it seeks to eradicate only that which destroys happiness? No! It is impossible that true religion can be opposed to any enjoyment, except that which has in it the element of sin, and, consequently, the seeds of sorrow.

Consider, in the second place, that *religion contains in itself the highest elements of happiness*. Religion reveals to us the heart of God. It gives us to see that, amidst all our unworthiness, the Great Jehovah loves us with infinite tenderness. It points us to God's unspeakable gift of his own dear Son, as the pledge of his love and of his heart's desire freely to bestow upon us every good. It shows us, that the object contemplated in the gift of Jesus is to bring us back to our Father in heaven, from whom we have wandered—to bind us to his government of love, against which we have rebelled—to restore us to his home of purity and joy, which we have forfeited. It presents us in Jesus with a full and free pardon of all our sins—puts us in possession of the great principle of sanctification—

and gives us a charter of privileges higher than those to which the angels aspire. It destroys the source of all fear, cuts off the streams of all sorrow, and brings all suffering to an end. Human language is too poor to express, the objects of our present vision are too insignificant to do more than symbolize, and our mind, even in its manhood-strength, is too feeble to imagine the unceasing and perpetually magnifying joys and pleasures which religion unfolds in its glorious prospectus. Now, we ask you, can religion be incompatible with happiness, when it does all this? It would be as correct to say that the sun is incompatible with light, as that religion, which is the source of the highest happiness, is at variance with it.

Do not then, dear reader, be swayed by the supposition, that to be religious is to be unhappy. Nothing is more untrue. Surely, you do not think that the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, and which close in a train of eternal misery, constitute happiness? And surely you do not think that that religion which seeks to save you from that misery, to introduce you into the enjoyment of the favour of God, the remission of all your transgressions, and the sure hope of realizing that fulness of joy which the presence of God imparts, and those pleasures which for evermore are found at his right hand, to be antagonistic to your happiness? And if you have understood religion to consist in that long-faced, gloomy penance-performing pretended sanctimoniousness, which some sadly mistaken professors of it manifest, do you not see that any such idea is utterly foreign to that religion whose apostle could say, 'Rejoice in the Lord alway; again I say, Rejoice;' and whose psalmist could exclaim—

‘O greatly bless’d the people are  
The joyful sound that know.’

But to appeal to your own consciousness. Is it not a happy thing to know that God loves you, and to know that your sins are forgiven, and your iniquities covered? This happiness religion gives. Do not then be deluded with the supposition, that religion is any friend to unhappiness. Banish from your mind the thought, that your happiness

would be lessened by religion. Dwell on the fact, that the supremely happy God regards you with love more intense than a parent's compassion. See in the gift of Jesus the pledge of this, and then shall you begin to experience a happiness of which you have never conceived.

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### WHAT BETTER ARE CHRISTIANS THAN OTHERS?

THIS question implies that Christians are no better than others, and that, as they are no better, it is useless for any person to become a Christian. It is asked with the distinct view of justifying the non-consideration of the claims of the Gospel. If you, dear reader, have ever proposed this question, you are aware that this is the design of it. Let us then observe, in regard to it, that it involves the following radical mistakes: It fails to distinguish what constitutes christian character; it confounds the Christian with the mere professor of Christianity; it forms an opinion of christian character from a counterfeit or caricature of it; it forgets that the Gospel ought to be judged of by its own merits, and not by the merits of its adherents; it forgets that, whatever the character of the professor of the Gospel may be, the character of the Gospel cannot be affected thereby; it forgets that the sinner ought not to regulate his conduct by that of his fellow-sinners; and it forgets that the sinner's relation to the Gospel is direct and personal, and that to determine aright the value of the Gospel, and his duty in relation to it, to the Gospel itself he must go.

It is not true that Christians are no better than others. It is a fact that commends itself to every conscience, that true christian character, whenever and wherever manifested, is felt to be not only vastly superior to the ordinary morality of mankind, but the highest order of goodness of which we can conceive. We admit that this, the true christian character, is not to be seen, as are the professors of religion, at every step; nor, when we do see it manifested,

is it so pure in its development as it might be. But this only proves that all are not Christians who bear the name; and that those who are what they profess to be, in assuming the name of Christ, do not unfrequently fail in walking worthy of their profession. But it does not prove that the Christian is no better than others. The man who is no better than others is no Christian. Mere professors are often worse than other men. Of these the Gospel is as condemnatory as it possibly could be. They are declared 'the enemies of the cross of Christ.'

But this affects not your position, dear reader. Your part is to judge Christianity on its own deserts, not on the deserts of those who profess it. Although all the professors of religion known to you are indifferent characters, that cannot justify you in despising the Gospel. All good coin is liable to counterfeits, and the more valuable that the coin is the greater is the liability of it to be imitated; for the possible gain by the imitation is proportionally increased, and, accordingly, the attempts at imitation are all the more numerous. Thus has it been with the Gospel in all ages. Wherever it has been developed it has been acknowledged to be 'very good;' and wherever it has appeared, spurious imitations have followed. Now, to judge of a coin by an imitation of it, whether good or bad, is foolish in the extreme; and no one would think of rejecting gold because of its liability to be falsified. Yet this is precisely the manner of those who form an estimate of the Gospel from the character of those who profess it, and reject it because these false exponents give an unfavourable impression.

The question for you is not, Are those who profess Christianity better than others? but, Can the Gospel do what it professes to accomplish? Can it make men better? Can it save the sinner? Is it God's remedy for guilty man? This is what you have to see to. What you have to be assured of is, that the Gospel can make you better—that it can save you—that it is God's remedy for you. See to these questions, and let questions regarding your fellow-men alone. Again, we call you to remember, that the Gospel is God's communication to you, and that he

requires you to take it as he has given it, and not as you have it exhibited by a perverse world. If you want a living example of the Gospel, you have it in the Lord Jesus. His life was an exact embodiment and illustration of that religion which bears his name. Now observe, that the Saviour himself, having come to bear witness to the truth, you are left inexcusable in taking the defective testimony of inconsistent professors, and making them your rule. Go, then, at once to the proper source of information, and seek there the information which your peculiar situation requires. You are an unsaved sinner, and what you should be solicitous to know is, whether the gospel CAN save you? Hear, then, the words of one who had experienced its efficacy: 'I am not ashamed,' says Paul, 'of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.'

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### BUT THERE ARE SO MANY SECTS.

THE consideration, that there are so many sects—all professing Christianity—is no doubt, in numerous instances, a perplexing thought to the inquirer. It is so, however, more from the way in which the difficulty is looked at, than from any thing really difficult in the fact itself. There are many sects, it is true; but why are there so many? Simply because the Word of God—those Scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, and to build up the believer, and give him an inheritance among all those that are sanctified, have been more or less departed from, both by individuals and communities, and have been supplanted by the writings and traditions of men. This having been done, it would have been miraculous had there not been such sections as now exist; nor can they be united till all human standards followed by them are thrown aside, and direct appeal is made to the infallible testimony of inspi-

ration. Let the Word of God be consulted, as the great directory given by Jehovah to man, individually and collectively—let it be used as such in all matters, both of doctrine and duty, by all who desire and profess to be disciples of the Lord Jesus, and speedily would sectarian differences cease, and the ‘unity of the faith’ be attained by all. But how unity of faith and practice is to be attained while the place of the one ‘law and testimony’ of the ‘one Spirit’ is occupied by human ‘standards’ of every description, we cannot discover. It is good, then, reader, not to be astonished at existing divisions in opinion and practice; but, seeing the cause of them, to submit yourself to the guidance of the inspired Word, and by the careful study of it, in regard to all matters, both of doctrine and precept, you shall certainly be directed into the path of truth, and led to associate with that body of Christians nearest to the New Testament model.

We entreat you to consider, that the existing sectarian divisions of professing Christians afford no proper argument for indifference to the Gospel. It may be said that they make the path of truth and duty more difficult to discern. Not if the Word of God be followed. But supposing that they do render the path obscure, still they do not make duty less duty, or truth less true. And if they do make the way difficult, we cannot but think that this is only an additional reason why the search after truth should be the sooner and the more earnestly commenced. Common sense dictates that, when a journey which must be overtaken in course of a day is intricate and difficult, we set about it all the earlier, and with all the greater carefulness, in order to accomplish it ere night-fall. Such, we apprehend, is the legitimate argument to be founded upon the intricacies produced by diversity of sects in the professedly christian church.

Again, we entreat you to reflect, that the diversity of which we speak is no argument against Christianity itself. It is not the Gospel, but departure from it, that has caused these divisions. They are unqualifiedly deprecated both by the Saviour and his apostles. Christianity is, in itself, essentially and truly the only principle by which



union can be restored amongst the members of the human family, and by which that family can be reinstated in union with God. Wherever the Gospel has been truly received, this twofold result has been developed. The Gospel reveals to man the heart of God, as a heart of love toward the whole human race, and toward every individual of it. Thus the apostle John could write to his fellow disciples in the following strains: 'In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him'—'And we know and believe the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him'—'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' Here is the principle of christian union in operation. Here, reader, you see it to arise in a development of the purest, heart-revealing, heart-binding love. It arises, as you see, first, in such an exhibition of the love of the great God toward us as, when believed in by us unfailingly, excites our affections toward him, brings us into communion with the Divine mind, and, consequently, leads out our affections toward those who are the objects of his regard. The Gospel is, therefore, by necessity of its very nature, essentially opposed to the unhallowed divisions that afflict alike the world and the church. These divisions, consequently, cannot rightly be charged against Christianity. The man who does so shows himself to be alike ignorant of the Gospel system, and of the cause of those evils which he attributes to it. While we think we have advanced arguments amply sufficient to show you, dear reader, that the sectional differences of Christians are attributable solely to a greater or less degree of departure from 'the faith once delivered to the saints,' and, consequently, that they afford you no ground of objection to the Gospel itself, but should rather lead you to the closest adherence to it, we still think it proper to guard you against magnifying the extent of prevalent division amongst Christians. We say not a word in palliation of the evil, so far as it really exists, but we

wish to prevent erroneous ideas regarding its extent, both real and comparative. We beg, therefore, that it be observed, that such is the present state of the world, that all men are sectaries, whether Christian or not; that the systems opposed to Christianity are vastly more split up into factions than Christianity is; that they are split to the very heart's core; whereas, in the great fundamental facts and doctrines of Christianity, all Christians are agreed; that while their opponents rend each other's systems to the very vitals, Christians are divided, not on the truth or tenableness of any part of Christianity, but merely on the views or representations given of it from different stand-points; and, moreover, that multitudes, having no right, either from their doctrine or practice, to the Christian name, assume it, and thus the Gospel is made to bear the obloquy which rightly belongs only to the systems of those who falsely profess the name of Jesus.

See, then, dear reader, that you are not lost to the truth through the spurious and insufficient plea, that there are so many sects. Remember that, however numerous, the Gospel is not their cause, nor to blame for them, nor the less true or binding upon you on their account. Be not, then, ashamed to receive the Gospel of Jesus, and become a member of that sect of which he is the founder, though it be a sect every where spoken against.

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### I AM NOT SO BAD.

THE spirit of self-justification is by none more eagerly and openly manifested than the guilty; and in their case it is one of the worst of features. It does not prove the party to be guiltless; it only shows that he is so blinded and hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, that he does not view his crimes in their native heinousness, but is led to gloss them over, and then to refuse to acknowledge himself so guilty as he really is. No state of mind is more

dangerous than this. It bars the individual from acknowledgment, from forgiveness, and from reformation. For, so long as he looks upon himself as in the right, or having deviated but slightly from it, so long will he continue determined on self-justification; and so long as he is determined to justify himself, whether right or wrong, it is certain that he will neither endeavour, nor submit to be corrected. Why should he, if, as he would persuade himself, he is right already, or so slightly wrong that he need give himself no concern?

Perhaps, dear reader, conscience has been reminding you that the Word of God declares that, among the sons of men, 'there is none righteous, no not one;' that 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;' and perhaps, in view of these fearful yet faithful representations of the human character, you have been saying, in the pride of your self-righteous spirit, it is an extreme description of human character which the Bible gives; it may be true enough of some; the character of many may answer to it; but I am not so bad. But let us affectionately remind you, that you are not the proper party to judge of the extent of your guilt. The guilty person is not the party to judge of the extent of his crime; for he cannot do so impartially. You forget that you do not see yourself as others see you, and that God alone discerns the true enormity and depth of your guilt. You make out others as bad as the Bible describes them, and they in turn declare you as bad. All men are witnesses against each other; and by the universal consent of humanity, man is pronounced a sinner, and you among the rest. The best that any man says of another is—he has many good qualities; but like all others, he has his faults. Thus the unwelcome truth of the guilt of man appears, notwithstanding all that fraternal charity can do to press it out of sight. Though the Bible had said nothing about it, the fact would have appeared, the fact after all, and good or bad, man would have been voted a sinner. It certainly is astonishing that any individual should justify himself against the universal verdict of his brethren; but infinitely more astonishing is it, that he persists in doing so against not only the voice

of man, but the verdict of God himself. Ah, reader, you may plead guilty or not as you please, but God, who cannot lie, pronounces you a transgressor.

Now, what does the plea that you are not a great sinner avail to your justification? You may be sure that God's word does not call you worse than what you are. Though you are not the greatest of sinners, yet you are a sinner; and the simple fact that you have sinned at all, makes you amenable to the sentence of the law—'the soul that sinneth it shall die.' It is not said, the soul that sinneth much or greatly, but simply—'the soul that sinneth.' And the reason is obvious, for you are as truly a sinner by breaking one requirement of the law, as by breaking all—you are as truly a transgressor by one act of disobedience, as by a thousand. So by the commission of a single act of transgression, you are as subject to the wages of sin as by the perpetration of every conceivable crime. Hence it is written, 'He that offendeth in *one point* is guilty of *all*.' Nor can it be otherwise with an infinitely perfect law; for if one act of transgression on the part of one sinner may be passed over, why may not all acts of transgression on the part of all sinners be likewise tolerated? Is the first sin not the prelude to all succeeding sins? And how could an unsullied government be conducted, and the holiness of the universe be preserved, but by a law which should meet sin in its first indications—a law which should dam up the spring that swells into the flood—a law which should uproot the seed that produces the fruit—a law which should reprobate the thought that inspires the crime—a law which should deal with the thing sin itself in its true character, and not merely when it reaches a supposed degree of enormity.

It matters nothing, therefore, to the justification of the sinner, that he has not sinned to the same extent as others. True, he may not have to bear so heavy a punishment as the man who has sinned more, but this is not justification. The fact that he has sinned comparatively little cannot save him from the verdict of death. But although we admit that there are degrees in the amount of sin committed by different individuals, yet we must beg you, dear

reader, to beware of supposing that, before you shall appear odious in the sight of God, certain atrocious sins, as men regard them, must be chargeable against you. Men naturally regard certain crimes against society as the most heinous, because the family of mankind feels them most. But with God it is different. God, as a Spirit, searches the heart; and defection there is, in his unerring judgment, the great and leading crime. Thus, while to mankind in general, and yourself in particular, the escutcheon of your character may appear almost unblemished, to God the very reverse is manifest. We do not, then, give you to suppose that, though we grant that there are degrees of sinfulness in human character, that you are not so bad. If you have not, with all the powers of your soul and spirit, loved the Lord your God at all times with supreme affection, and if you have not regarded your fellow-men with the same amount of love which you bear toward yourself, God must regard you essentially and radically a sinner; for such is the necessarily unyielding requirement of his holy government.

Examine your character in this light, and how stands it with you? How have you felt and acted toward God? Have you loved him as you ought! or have you loved him at all? You have not; and herein lies the criminating point of your character—here the mainspring of all your sin. Now, seeing this, take a retrospect of your past life, and see if you can reckon up the vast multitude of the sins which you have committed under the defection of your heart from God. Can you give the number of them during the space of a single day? You cannot. The number of your sins in course of but a few hours is altogether beyond your powers of reckoning. Yet you would have it, that you are not so bad. Ah, the deceitfulness of sin!

You are just so bad that your sins are enough to sink you to hell. You are just so bad that you must perish, unless you are saved by the divine Redeemer from the impending vengeance of the broken law. You are just so bad that there is no remedy, no escape for you, but through the One Mediator. Deceive yourself no longer with this

futile, false excuse. Behold your character in all the deformity in which it is beheld in heaven, and rejoice that, though the wages of sin is death, yet the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Ah, sinner, hide not your sins but under the cover of the blessed Saviour's righteousness. There alone can you hide them never more to appear against you.

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### THERE ARE MANY AS BAD AS I AM.

It is not at all necessary for us to attempt to disprove this, dear reader. There may be tens of thousands as bad, or it may be, worse than you, but this can avail you nothing. Do you seriously imagine that, because others are as bad as you, your sins may therefore be palliated or excused? Can the fearful fact, that 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,' make you less a sinner, or less amenable to divine justice, than if you were the only transgressor on God's earth? Impossible! Suppose six men, separately, to commit certain capital offences, and all of them, one after another, to be sentenced to death for their crimes, what advantage would it be to any one of the six that there were five others as bad as himself? Would this make any of them less criminal? Must not each have to suffer for his own crime? Must not each have to die alone? Where, then, the advantage or comfort of the thought that five others were as bad? And where, sinner, is the gain to you of the reflection, that there are many as bad as you are? Is it not written, 'Every man shall bear his own burden?' You, therefore, must bear yours in all the solitariness of your own individuality. You know, that though God addresses all men in general, yet he deals with every man by himself. He sends home to each the arrow of conviction, in the language of the prophet to David, 'Thou art the man.' Ah, reader, there is a solemn individuality in sin. Every sin that you have committed

- is registered against you as your sin, and not another's. You, and not another—you, and no one with you—must answer for your transgressions. If you refuse to realize this solemn truth now, you shall be made to feel it at the hour of death. You know that, though death takes away all, yet he takes them one by one. Though thousands may die at the same moment that the death-warrant is issued against you, still you must *die alone*. Then shall you feel your fearful solitariness as a sinner; and then, it shall be no comfort to you that you had companions and equals in sin.

We call upon you to dismiss at once this objection from your mind. We call upon you to dismiss it, not only because it is false and untenable, but because it is ruinously deceptive. Not only does it lead you erroneously to imagine that there is something extenuating in the humiliating fact that others are as bad as yourself, but it induces you to think lightly of sin; it leads you to entertain imperfect notions of the depth of your own criminality; it serves as a perpetual excuse for sin; and leads you gradually on to the perpetration of crimes of the deepest dye. There is no sin, however enormous in committing, which you cannot say—there are others as bad as I am. In this way will it lead you down the broad road of destruction with fearful rapidity. It has no stopping point whatever. Give it lodgment in your mind, and it shall lead you down to the level of the worst of beings. It shall sink you into the grave of the damned as certainly as if you were already there. And still it will form the same excuse as now. It will learn you to point to Satan himself, and say—there are others as bad as I am. Believe it, reader, if you suffer yourself to be led by this fallacy, you ensure yourself against the possibility of repentance or salvation. You cannot come to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, or the need you have of a Saviour, so long as you excuse your sins with the idea that you are no worse than others.

We again entreat you to consider, that it contains no real comfort or extenuation in your case whatever. Although others are as bad as you, will God compare you with them, or judge of you by them? No, indeed. He will

institute no comparison of character between you—much less make their sinfulness the measure of yours. His own holy and perfect law is the only standard with him. By it you are measured; and if you are found wanting in a single point, death is the sure award.

O then, fellow-sinner, flee from this soul-destroying delusion. Flee from it as would a bird from the fowler's snare. Give it no longer a place in your thoughts. Dismiss it now and for ever, never more to sway you. Look upon your character in all its deformity as mirrored forth by the law of God. Seek no extenuating plea. Compare yourself no more with your fellow-sinners. Keep before your mind how far you have offended. Remember what you are, and what you might have been. Flee at once to the sinner-receiving Saviour. Whatever the amount of your sins may be you need a Saviour, such a Saviour as Jesus is. You need a righteous, a perfect righteousness like his in which to approach the infinitely holy God. You need a work, a finished work like Christ's, on which to cast your sinful self. If, then, you will compare yourself with others, let the comparison run thus—there are many as bad as I am who, having taken refuge in Christ, are saved; I now do so too, and doing so, am likewise safe in Jesus.

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### I HAVE A GOOD HEART.

SUCH is the fondly cherished plea of many a sinful soul. Reader, is it yours? If so, what mean you by it? Do you not mean that you have a kind disposition—that you wish evil of no one—that you have not wilfully wronged your fellow-men, and would be very sorry to do so? This, we apprehend, is the amount of it. On this goodness of heart, then, rests your hope of heaven. We have known the aged sinner, on the verge of the grave, seek consolation from this very plea. Now, let us see what it is worth.



Let us see if it can possibly obtain the panel's discharge from the bar of God.

It will be observed, then, that this plea says nothing of God—nothing of the relation subsisting between him and man—nothing of his claims upon us as his offspring, and the creatures of his unsparing bounty. However good the heart of the individual using the plea may be, it is not a heart of love to God—it is not a heart that has been given to him. Though he has the first, the highest, and an inalienable claim upon its affections, yet they have never ascended to him. Suppose, dear reader, that you are a good and wise parent, you would certainly expect your children to love and obey you. But here is one, and notwithstanding you have heaped innumerable favours upon him, have cared tenderly for him from the first, and have done every thing that could be done for his welfare, yet he has altogether disregarded you—he has acted toward you as if he were quite independent of you—as if he were not at all indebted to you—as if you had no claim whatever upon him—as if, indeed, you had no existence, except that, when he did think of you, it was only to wish you had no being. Now, what would you think of that son justifying himself under the idea of having a good heart? Would you consider him deserving of the name of good-heartedness? Would you not expostulate with him thus—Ah, my son, you are deeply deceiving yourself. You say you have a good heart, and yet you have never loved your nearest, kindest, greatest friend! Your idea is all a delusion. But, moreover, suppose that this young man founded his claim to goodness of heart upon his conduct to his brothers; and suppose that, though he showed a general kindness of disposition toward them, yet, from his infidelity to his father, he, instead of teaching them to love, revere, and obey him, had influenced them to the same sinful disregard with which he himself treated his sire. What, then, would you say of his good heart? Would you consider that its goodness was sufficient to acquit him from the double crime of which he stood guilty? Would you not regard his pretensions to good-heartedness as utterly preposterous? And would you not consider such a fellow as

an enemy alike to his father and his brothers, and fit only to be expelled from the family?

Now, if such would be the decision on an earthly parent being thus treated, what verdict must be given against those who treat God in this, if not in a manner worse than this? Would the plea of a good heart be entertained here? Impossible. Neither can it, dear reader, with you. This is precisely your position before God, to say nothing of your other manifold transgressions against him. Having done every thing to make you love him, God expects your love; and can you say that this is too much for him to expect? Would it be right for him to expect less than your love? It is impossible. Well, how much of your love has God received? None of it—positively none; nay, less; for have you never entertained hard, hateful, and even blasphemous thoughts of him? Yes, you have—you know you have. Where, then, is your good heart? Where, O sinner, does all the fondly fancied goodness of your sinful heart appear, when confronted with your heartlessness toward your Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and Saviour?

O, reader, risk not your eternal well-being on such a hollow misthought as you have been entertaining. Think how such an idea must be viewed in heaven. Whatever men, who are in the same condemnation with yourself, may think of your heart, has it not been 'an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God?' However right in the esteem of men, it cannot be so in the sight of God. And never, never can your heart be a good heart, till it is made so by the love of God being shed abroad in it. And never, never can that be, till you perceive the love of God toward you as it shines forth in the unspeakable gift of his beloved Son.

## MY PARENTS WERE GOOD PEOPLE.

THERE is in many minds a supposition that, according to the covenant, or arrangement of Divine mercy, some indefinite good is surely connected with religious parentage, which, sooner or later, shall eventuate in the salvation of the children; and, consequently, that there is not the same danger and criminality in the offspring of believing persons delaying to consider the obligations of the Gospel, as on the part of those not privileged with christian parents. In endeavouring, dear reader, to meet this objection, and show you that, beyond the advantages of good example and teaching, religious parentage gives you no superiority of position or privilege, we do not require to dispute the excellence of either the moral or religious character of your parents. We have simply to show you that, however pious they may have been, their piety is no advantage to you further than it is the means of setting you, by influence and precept, in the way of life. This, we wish to show you, is the amount of the privilege you have enjoyed; and that it is, consequently, delusive for you to suppose that, in virtue of your parents' piety, you are in any way charmed against the loss of your soul, or that it is not as much your immediate duty to receive the Gospel, as it is the duty of others not so highly privileged as yourself.

Observe, then, that religion is personal, and not hereditary. Religion is that state in which the obligations binding on man, in the relationship which he sustains to God and his fellow-creatures, are acknowledged and fulfilled. It is evident, therefore, that if your parents were religious, they were so only for themselves—they could not do more than fulfil their own obligations. For example, they could not love God for you. They were themselves indebted to love God—and you say they loved him; but you also are indebted to love God—this your parents could not do for you. No creature can be religious for another. Your parents' piety is not yours. Their goodness is not

your goodness. What goodness they had they required to have—and they had none to spare. Although you could show that they were perfectly holy—so holy as not even to have required the mediation of the Saviour—their holiness could avail nothing to your justification.

You will grant, doubtless, that your parents' character was determined by their own conduct. In like manner is your character being determined by your conduct. You overlook, that character cannot, in the very nature of things, be made or determined for an individual. Character is just that which is true of a person. It is, therefore, his line of procedure that determines it. It cannot be made for him. Man enters the scene of his probation with his character—what philosophers designate a *tabula rasa*—a plain surface, on which nothing is written. He gets character afterwards, according as he acts his part.

If you will plead your parental connexion, you ought to bear in mind its disadvantages not less than its privileges. Whatever advantages the piety of your parents has brought you, you should not overlook the depravity of which you are the legatee through them. Their piety, however great, did not, as you will allow, eradicate the depravity of their characters previous to their conversion to God. And if the goodness of which their spiritual regeneration made them partake has given you a tendency to goodness, not less certainly has their depravity given you a tendency to evil. Which tendency shall prevail, you must determine. It would be quite as proper for you to argue that you shall be condemned because of the depravity which you inherit, as it is for you to suppose that the good you may have derived shall justify you. If you wish to reap the benefit of your parents' piety, it must be by following in the steps of their faith.

It will complete our argument to show you, that this view which we have now given is the doctrine of the Divine covenant of salvation. God's arrangement was to justify men through faith—not faith in their own worth—not faith in their parents' character—but faith in Christ Jesus. In Galatians iii. 8, 9, we read—'The Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through

faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.' 'He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, *which is Christ.*' 'So then, *they who are of faith* are blessed with faithful Abraham.' It being God's arrangement to justify both Jews and Gentiles by faith in the one Mediator, the same doctrine was announced alike to all. The Jews, as the direct descendants of Him to whom the promises were made, conceived themselves to have a claim upon the privileges of the Gospel independent of their personal faith in the Saviour; but when they came to John, the harbinger, claiming to be baptised in virtue of their relation to Abraham, we are informed, in Matthew iii. 8, 9, that the answer they got was—'Bring forth fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father.' And Acts ii. 38, 39, in which we have the apostle's authoritative announcement of the terms of the new covenant, corroborates the doctrine of John, that the blessings of the new economy are conditional upon personal repentance, or change of mind; and further, that these terms applied not only to those whom the apostle addressed, but also to their descendants, and to all besides.

We hope then, dear reader, that you see it is a mistake to trust to your parental connexion. God does not tell you to trust to your parents' faith. He did not tell the Jews to believe in Abraham's faith. But what he requires is—that we believe what Abraham believed. Abraham was required to believe in Jesus. He believed God's promises, and his faith was imputed to him for righteousness; and, says Romans iv. 23-25, 'Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but for us also to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.' Be persuaded then, dear reader, at once to direct your thoughts to Jesus. Why make your parents, or any creature, the object of your faith, when it is the Saviour in whom God requires you to believe? Think not that, because your parents believed, you may get off without

believing. Remember that the terms of salvation are the same to you as to them. They could not have been saved but by believing in him who died for their offences—nor can you, but by believing as they believed. Consider that, by persisting in clinging to your parental connexion, you are acting the part of the foolish virgins who said to the wise, 'Give us of your oil;' and beware lest, when you find your lamp going out, as certainly you shall, it is too late for you to go and buy for yourself.

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### I AM A MEMBER OF A CHURCH.

It is fatal to imagine that membership in a professedly christian church constitutes a man a Christian. If you, dear reader, hold this or any similar idea, be assured that you are building on a foundation of sand; and that, if you do not see your error now, and remedy it in time, you shall see it when the storms and floods come and beat upon your house, and it is too late either for you to rectify the mistake or escape the ruin.

Let us ask, how mere admission into a body of professing Christians constitutes the party joining the community a Christian? If you are not a Christian before joining a church, how does joining make you one? It cannot do so. Joining any christian body can never make a man a Christian. He must be a Christian before he joins himself to those who profess to be Christians, otherwise he has no business to enter the community. What is it that makes a church a christian church, but the fact that each member is a Christian? If the members individually are not Christians, how do they become so by joining together? Nothing can be more evident than this, that if men are not Christians before joining together as a church, their joining together will not, and cannot make them Christians. Suppose twenty bad men to be living separately, would they become good men by merely con-

gregating together? Not unless they were to undergo a reformation. But how would this be done? Certainly they must do it individually—each man for himself. Notwithstanding their union, and notwithstanding its having a good design, yet they must separately undergo the process of reformation quite as much as if they were not united together. So is it exactly with the sinner and the Gospel. The Gospel is the reforming means, and the christian church is the congregation of the reformed. A man must, therefore, be a reformed person—a converted person—a regenerated person—before he joins himself to the community of the reformed. To join them otherwise is simply to put himself out of his place—to make himself suppose that he is what he is not—to make himself fancy that he is a Christian while he is still an unsaved sinner. The mere fact of church-membership does not make a man a Christian.

It is not enough, then, dear reader, that you are a church-member. How did you become a member, is the question? Did you take the Scripture means of becoming one? Have you now the Scripture qualifications of one? Are you a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you a converted, a justified, a saved person? Have you peace with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you giving evidence of your conversion to God by a life becoming the Gospel of Christ? If you cannot answer all these queries in the affirmative, then we say, dear friend, you have no right to be a member of a christian church. Your membership is worse than worthless. It is a delusion and a snare. It leads you to think yourself safe when you are in the utmost danger—when, if at this moment you were to die, you would die unsaved. The sooner that such membership is dissolved the better. Even supposing the church with which you are connected to be a church of converted persons—all except yourself—what are you amongst them, but the dead amongst the living?

What said the Saviour to Nicodemus when he came to inquire regarding his kingdom? John iii. 3, 5, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' 'Verily, verily, I say

unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' 'Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.'

Reader, have you been born again? Have you been born of the Spirit? If not, marvel not that it is said unto you, 'Ye must be born again.' This is the all-important matter for you. See first to this. See how you are to undergo this birth of the Spirit. Rest not till you learn and experience this. But you ask, How am I to know? The Holy Spirit tells you, in 1 John v. 1, 'Whosoever *believeth* that Jesus is the Christ, is *born of God*.' Yes, fellow-sinner, it is by your believing in Jesus that you become the subject of that spiritual regeneration which is essential to your membership in the kingdom of God. Beware, then, of your position. Remember that you must be united to the Saviour through faith before professing yourself his by union with his people. Consider that church-membership cannot save you—that you must be saved before you can unite with those who are saved—and that if, while unsaved, you, by union with the saved, profess to be saved, your position is unscriptural, false, and ruinous.

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## A VERY GOOD CHRISTIAN; OR, THE NEW BIRTH.

THE notion is not uncommon, that punctual attendance on the public ordinances of the Gospel entitles a man to the name of a Christian. Without any further qualification than this, any person of ordinary character is quite sure to be generally recognized as 'a very good Christian.' And with equal complacency, do not a few believe in their own Christianity on the the same ground.

This notion is utterly fatal to genuine religion. It ignores the necessity of the sinner's conversion to God. It overlooks the spirituality of true worship. It transforms *the obedience of faith*—to ensure which the proclamation of the Gospel is enjoined, and which can only



be rendered by those who have believingly received the Gospel—into *works of unbelief*. It thus destroys the evangelical character of the Gospel institutes, and makes them mere deeds of law—mere actions, for the doing of which salvation is to be given. It next makes the sinner a believer in his own merits, instead of a dependant on the righteousness of Christ. It is, consequently, the common parent of self-righteousness, formality, and every species of religious imposture and pretence. And, ultimately, it gives radically false views of Christian character and Christianity, alike to those who are under the influence of the notion and to the world at large.

You are not then, dear reader, for a moment to believe that you are a very good Christian, or that you are any Christian at all, by the mere observance of religious ordinances. You may be rigidly exact in all the observances prescribed by the system to which you are attached; you may believe them to be all in accordance with the Word of God; and most, if not all of them, may really be so; yet you may not be a Christian for all, and the reason is obvious. The ordinances of the christian church, which you have been endeavouring to observe, were not intended to make men Christians; and they cannot do it. Your baptism has not made you a Christian—your church attendance has not—your church-membership has not—your partaking of the supper has not—your praises have not—your prayers have not—your family devotions have not—your charities have not—your zeal has not. It is not the observance of one or all of these together that constitutes a man a Christian. True, he cannot be a Christian who neglects the Gospel requirements enumerated; yet he may observe them all, and be no Christian. What, then, is it that constitutes a man a Christian?

In the preceding paper, we quoted the Saviour's words to Nicodemus, demonstrating the necessity of a new birth in order to admission into the kingdom of God. That new birth is what constitutes a man a Christian. It is by it that he becomes one. The hour of his being 'born again' is the instant of his emergence from the death of trespasses and sins in which he lay—of his entrance on the

Christian life—of his translation into the family of Christ—and of his conversion from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. That these things are so, and that the man who has not undergone this transition, is no Christian, is demonstrated by such passages as 2 Cor. v. 17, and Gal. vi. 15, 'If any man be in Christ he is *a new creature*; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.' 'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a *new creature*.'

You see then, dear reader, that the truth of your Christianity is not to be determined by the observance of outward ordinances. You may observe the whole of them; yet the question, after all, is, Are you born again? are you a regenerated person? have you passed from death unto life? are you a new creature in Christ Jesus? If you cannot concur in the words of 1 John iii. 14, '*We know that we have passed from death unto life*,' you ought not to conclude that you are a Christian, that you are saved, or that you are a child of God. It is your part to discard entirely the qualifications on which you have been grounding your christianity, and to yield at once to the Divine Spirit's instrumentality, so that you may become what you have imagined yourself to be. You need be at no loss to know what this instrumentality is, for in various parts of Scripture it is distinctly stated. James, i. 18, says it is the word of truth, 'Of his own will begat he us with *the word of truth*.' 1 Pet. i. 23-25, tells us, that by this word of truth we are to understand the gospel. 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.' 'And this is the word which by *the gospel* is preached unto you.' To the gospel! then, unconverted reader, to the gospel! Receive it into your heart by faith, and then shall you be a converted soul—a new creature—a child of God—and a Christian.

It is deeply important that you clearly understand the import and application of the various terms—'born again,' 'born of God,' 'born of the Spirit,' 'new creature,' and the

like—employed by the Holy Spirit to express and describe the transition through which the sinner passes on entering the christian state. All these terms refer to the one thing; they only describe it in various aspects. For example, man has already been born—had he not, he could not have been what he is—a member of the human family. So just as he required to be born once, in order to enter this one family, he must be regenerated, or '*born again*,' in order to enter another family. The birth he has already undergone is of the flesh, and by it he has entered into fleshly relationships, as this was necessary in order to his becoming a member of a fleshly family; so he must be '*born of the Spirit*,' in order to enter a spiritual family, for 'that which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.' But again, inasmuch as the fleshly family into which man is already born is a human family, and as the spiritual family into which it is contemplated to introduce him is divine, it is indispensable that those who receive the privilege to become sons of God, should be born, 'not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Hence the propriety of the terms, '*born again*,' '*born of the Spirit*,' '*born of God*,' &c.

There is another aspect in which this subject must be viewed before it can be fully understood. The death from which the new birth delivers the sinner, is that state to which his sin made him subject, namely, a state of condemnation by the law of God, and of alienation from the fellowship of God; in a word, separation from Him whose '*favour is life*.' There being these two elements in the death of sin—condemnation and alienation; that which is to make alive the sinner from this death, must, of course, be able to deliver from the two elements in which the death in which he lies consists. Such is the ability of the gospel of the grace of God. In the offering of the Lord Jesus as a sacrifice for human guilt, it manifests the power of deliverance from condemnation; and in the fact that God so loved mankind as to surrender the Son of his love up to the death for them; it possesses the power of disarming the sinner of his enmity toward God,

and of leading him back to the fellowship of his Maker. Such, in a few words, is the philosophy of the Bible doctrine of regeneration.

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## WAITING AT THE POOL OF ORDINANCES.

ALTHOUGH it is by no means uncommon to find inquirers after peace with God waiting, as they suppose, at the pool of ordinances for the moving of the waters, yet so dark and confused are their ideas as to what they are about, that it is a question if two persons could be found who would give the same explanation of their position or expectation in following the course which they do. At the best, they have but an ill-defined hope that, by thus waiting, they may one time or other get that assurance of safety which they desire. They have no idea how they are to get it by such means; but not knowing a more excellent way, they take this rather than none. These, we believe, are the feelings generally of this class of religious inquirers. The whole round of real or supposed Christian duties and privileges is regarded as the pool of ordinances; and without any distinct notion of the particular design of each ordinance, or of the fitness of the party to partake in it, the whole round is entered into, in the vague expectation that the wished-for peace shall be thus obtained. By this commingling of the whole together in one confused heap, the respective uses, purposes, and applicabilities of the New Testament institutions, or means of grace, as they are called, are altogether lost sight of; and instead of the benefit which they were intended to convey being afforded, the inquirer is only the more perplexed; and his inquiries end in despair or indifference, unless the proper course is discovered by him.

If, dear reader, you have been seeking peace with God at the pool of ordinances, we beg you to observe, that the different ordinances of the christian church have each

their respective purposes; and, therefore, that they are to be used, not indiscriminately, but for those purposes for which they were instituted, and by individuals sustaining the character and position to which the different ordinances apply. Just as we would not tell a sorrowing man to sing, as we would a joyful man; or, just as we would not give the burden of the strong to the weak; or, just as we would not direct an instrument fitted for a particular operation, to every purpose, however unfit, neither should we use the ordinances of the Gospel indiscriminately; but, discovering first the position, the character, the wants of the person in question, we should then administer such only of the institutes of the Gospel as apply to his case and need. There should be a right dividing of the word of God. There is milk for the babes, and meat for those of riper years. We should not tell those who have not faith, to do what is required of those who have it. We should not tell those who are seeking salvation, to endeavour to get it by instrumentalities intended only for those who enjoy salvation. No! The man who wants faith should be directed to the source whence it comes, and not to those things which express that he already has it. The man who wants peace should be referred to the fountain whence the stream of peace flows into the conscience, and not to ordinances which signify that the observer of them has already obtained it.

To be more express, those who have not yet peace with God—who are not yet saved, should not be allowed, far less directed to the observance of ordinances, which are intended only for those who have peace with God, and are already of the saved. The sinner who is anxious about his soul's salvation, and is not yet a saved person, should give his attention to *no ordinance but the gospel*. For all in this position the gospel is the only thing to be considered. They must be brought to see it and to believe it before they go a step further. The Saviour's commission to the disciples was—'Go into all the world, and preach *the gospel* to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' Accordingly, the apostle, referring the Corinthians to the gospel which he had preached to them,

says, 1 Cor. xv. 3, 'I delivered unto you, *first of all*, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.' By this gospel he tells them that they were saved according to the Saviour's declaration, that he that believed it would be saved. You, then, dear reader, must believe this gospel if you want salvation. It is by the belief of this that you obtain peace with God, and are qualified for the farther institutions of the church of Christ. In no other way can you get solid, lasting peace to your troubled, sin-crushed soul, than by believing the joy, and hope-inspiring intelligence, that Jesus died for your sins. Till you believe this you must remain without peace with God—you must remain unsaved; and all your observances must be useless to you, and must be rejected by God.

Find a passage in all the New Testament if you can, dear reader, where the Saviour or his apostles told an anxious unsaved sinner to wait at the pool of ordinances. Find such a passage in all the Bible as the pool of ordinances, if you can? Were all enquirers after salvation not at once pointed to the Lamb of God bearing away the sins of the world? What did the apostle say to the Philippian jailor, in answer to his question—What must I do to be saved? Acts xvi. 30–31: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Can you discover a single line to show that the apostles, or any of the believers to whom they wrote, obtained peace with God in any other way than by faith in the peace-speaking blood of Jesus? Never! Hear Paul addressing the Roman believers:—Rom. v. 1, 9, 10, 'Being *justified by faith* we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' 'Much more then, *being now justified by his blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved through his life.' Fellow-sinner, Jesus suffered death for you, and now his blood is available to your justification, and by now relying upon its efficacy, at once you shall experience the most perfect peace with God, and the fullest sense of the safety of your soul.

## WAITING FOR EFFECTUAL CALLING.

WE can scarcely imagine a more strange and unphilosophical idea than that expressed by the words—waiting for effectual calling. A call, as every one knows, is an invitation or request; and an effectual call is an invitation responded to—a call which takes effect. When a call is heard and obeyed, there we have effectual calling. In the gospel economy it is God who calls, and it is to the sinner that he calls; and when the sinner listens and yields to the call of God, then the call is effectual. Thus, reminding the Thessalonian Christians of their call to the faith, the apostle says, in his first epistle, ii. 11–13, ‘Ye know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which *effectually worketh* also in you that believe.’ From this quotation it is evident that the effectualness of the gospel call, as well as any other, is contingent on the reception of it on the part of those to whom it is addressed. We are here distinctly taught, that it remains for those called to accept or refuse the call, and that their reception or rejection of it determines its effect. The apostle’s doctrine, that the word, message, or call, works effectually in those who believe it, plainly implies that the call, though made, does not work effectually in those who do not believe it. Since, then, on the apostle’s own showing, the effectualness of the gospel call depends on the decision of the party called, how inconsistent is it for any such party to say, I am waiting for effectual calling. It is in effect saying, I am waiting on myself—I am waiting till I decide to accept this call. O reader, be not so inconsistent.

But not only is this idea most absurd in itself, but it impugns the honour and sincerity of God, especially in the

form in which it is most commonly entertained. For example, it will be objected to the view which we have now given of the subject—thus: This is not my idea of effectual calling; what I mean by it, is that powerful operation of God, by which his call is made to take effect. But do you not see, dear reader, that so far from this making the idea better, it makes it greatly worse; for this view of the matter is not the natural idea of the words, ‘effectual calling,’ nor yet of the Scripture statements regarding the subject; for both the phrase itself, and the apostle’s words quoted, as any one must observe, convey the impression, that the taking effect of the call lies, not with the person who calls, but the person called upon. But if it did rest with the party calling to render the call effectual, what then? Why, the assumption is, that though God is calling, inviting, beseeching, sinners to accept salvation, yet he is withholding that something which is necessary to make the call effectual! Any such idea as this is a fearful libel on the character of God. It is to take the entire responsibility of believing the gospel off the sinner’s shoulders, and assign to this double acting on the part of God, the cause of the unbelief and loss of the unsaved of mankind. Do not for a moment, dear reader, harbour the thought, that God, in calling you, as he has long been doing by the gospel, is not doing so in all sincerity, and is not putting forth every power necessary to render the call effectual to your salvation. The thought that you have to wait for God to put forth an energy which he has not been doing all along, and that it rests with him, by putting forth this energy, to make his call effectual, is a stratagem of the Deceiver, by which to get you to delay in indifference till it be too late. It is an insinuation that God is not so desirous to save you as he might be—that he is not doing all for you that he can wisely and righteously do; and that, if you are not saved, it is not because of your trifling with, or rejecting, the divine calls of mercy, but because of God withholding the necessary something which is to render his call effectual. How different is that idea from the teaching of the holy Spirit! When or where was ever enquirer told by



Jesus or his apostles, to wait for effectual calling. Instead of the sinner having any such ground of complaint against God, God complains of the sinner. 'All day long,' says he, 'I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people,' Rom. x. 21. 'I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you: then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me,' Prov. i. 24-28.

See then, dear reader, the all-important truth, that God in his love is now calling you—calling you, by the gospel, to his kingdom and glory. And see that by believing that gospel, the call becomes effectual in you. Wait, then, no longer. Remember that *now* is the hour of succour; and that, if you persist in your delay, the fearful reverse against which you are now warned must overtake you.

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### WAITING GOD'S TIME.

THIS would be right if God's time to save had not come. If God is unwilling to save now, or less willing to do so at present than he will be at some future period, then it would be right for you, dear reader, to say, I must wait God's time. If God had declared, that he is not now prepared to save you, but will be so some time hence, then you would be quite justifiable in waiting. But we ask if it be thus with God? Is it true that he is not as willing to save you now as he will be at any future period of your history? Does he not declare, that he is willing now to save you—that he is anxious now to save you? Is it like God—is it consistent with his character—is it agree-

able to any principle of his procedure—is it accordant with any law of reason or nature, to suppose that God is not now as desirous to save you as ever he will or can be? Where have you got the notion, that any period yet future is more God's time than the present? Who told you that the present is not God's time? What reason have you for supposing that God wishes to keep from you, for a single moment, the blessings of salvation? Does he delight in the rebellion of his creatures? Does he wish to keep them in sin—in darkness or suspense? Or is it not his desire now to save the lost? Who that loses any thing would say, let it remain lost for so long, and then let it be sought for, and if possible found? Why should we believe that God would do so with his lost creature, man? We wish, dear reader, to probe your thoughts on this question. We wish you to discover if there is any reason whatever for saying, that you must wait God's time. Now, if we can shew that the present is really God's time—that even at this very moment he is prepared, willing, and anxious to save you, then you must perceive, that you are deluding yourself by supposing that you have to wait. Now, what shall prove this to you? If you cannot point to a single passage in the Bible that tells you to wait, and not a single word that tells you that God is not now willing to save you; and if, again, we can point you to the most emphatic declarations on God's part, that he is, at this moment, infinitely desirous to save you, will you be convinced—will you comply with God's proposals of mercy? If so, then this very hour all may be well with you—you may stand accepted and safe in Jesus. But if you decline to accede to the word and will of God, then you must remember that it will not do for you to continue saying, I must wait God's time.

One passage in proof, then, from the Old and New Testaments respectively. Listen to Isa. i. 18: 'Come *now* and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' Listen also to 2 Cor. vi. 2: 'Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation!'

Now, dear reader, what meaning do you suppose these words to contain, if they do not teach you the delightful truth, that at this moment God is waiting to be gracious. Instead of telling you to wait on God, they tell you that God is waiting on you. Is it not the fact, that he has been waiting on you from the first hour that you heard the gospel? Yes, from that time to the present, he has been waiting for you to reason the matter—he has been waiting for you, to have your sins washed away in the blood that was freely shed for you—that blood which cleanseth from all sin. O, sinner, see this, and no longer delude yourself by supposing that you have to wait a single second. Before you close this paper, commit yourself in faith to the saving efficacy of the sin-purging blood of Jesus.

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### WAITING GOD'S OWN TIME AND WAY.

THIS objection is very similar to the one just disposed of. Both assume that God is not now prepared to receive and forgive the sinner. In addition, however, to the idea that God's time to forgive has not yet come, the objection now being considered implies, that God's *way of forgiveness* is not yet opened up. It is all this the worse than the previous. We think, dear reader, that we have shown you, that *now* is God's time to save, and, therefore, that you do not require to wait for the coming of his time. Now, if we have succeeded in proving this, then it follows, that God's way of saving sinners must also now be open; for if his way is not yet open, his time cannot yet have come. But if his time has come, his way must be open.

Now, we grant that you may attach some peculiar meaning to the words, 'God's own time and way;' but whatever that meaning may be, we trust you will see that you must give it up as untenable, if it does not accord with the Bible doctrine on God's time and way of saving sinners.

Having, then, demonstrated that *now* is God's declared time of acceptance and salvation, we beg you next to consider what we have to advance regarding the way in which God forgives and saves.

There is only one way of a sinner's acceptance and salvation acknowledged by God. That way is the Lord Jesus Christ. In John xiv. 6, he says, 'I am *the way*, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father *but by me*;' and in Heb. x. 19, 20, we read, 'Having, therefore, brethren, boldness (or liberty) to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. By *a new and living way* which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.' From these passages it is clearly evident, that God's way of receiving the sinner is already open. These Scriptures teach us that the way was open and ready more than eighteen centuries ago. Why, then, should any sinner say, I must wait God's way? Does God not acknowledge his own dear Son as the sinner's one way of access to the enjoyment of the forgiveness and favour of God? And did Jesus not, by the shedding of his precious blood, rend the veil and clear the way for the sinner; and has the way thus auspiciously opened not remained open ever since? Do you dispute this, dear reader! No you do not. Why then speak of waiting God's own time and way? Is it not most unreasonable?

Now, remember that you must not attempt to get off by the objection—O, that is not the way I mean: when I speak of God's way, I do not mean the Saviour. We implore you to remember, that God acknowledges no other way than Jesus. You may speak of another way as God's if you please, but bear in mind that God will repudiate it. It is yours to rejoice that he is now prepared to receive you through the Redeemer, and enter into the blessedness of the man whose sins are forgiven by this new and living way, and not to wait for another. Yes, fellow-sinner, God is now prepared to receive you into his favour through Jesus. His word to you, through the blessed Redeemer's parable of Matt. xxii., is—'*All things are ready, Come.*' What say you, then, reader? what say you? O, take the way at once, for it is open, and that to you.

## WAITING THE DAY OF GOD'S POWER.

THE day of God's power has already come. In Psalm cx., David speaks prophetically of the Saviour's consecration to the priestly office, and his exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, and in relation to these facts of the Redeemer's advent, he says, 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.' It is, therefore, manifest that the day of power, thus foretold, dawned with the public proclamation of these other glorious events here predicted concerning the Messiah. We see, therefore, that the day of God's power has already come, and this being the case, it follows that you, dear reader, have not to wait for it. For why should you wait for that which has arrived? 'What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?'

But what do you imagine the day of God's power signifies? What do you expect it to be? What do you hope to realize that you may not now experience? Is there anything connected with your salvation in which the power of God is wanting now? Is God not now putting forth his saving power on behalf of lost humanity? What is the gospel but this? What says Paul relative to it in Rom. i. 16!—'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; *for it is the power of God* unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Here, reader, is God's power—his saving power held out to you. Do you yield to it? Do you give yourself over in faith to be saved by it? Mark you, it is declared to be God's power to save every one that believes. Do you then believe, or do you not? We beseech you to consider that it does not profess to exercise its saving power over the unbeliever. Listen to 1 Pet. i. 3-5, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven *for you who are kept by the power of God, THROUGH FAITH*

unto salvation.' The facts of the case then are these, the saving power of God is embodied in the gospel, and is exercised unto the salvation of all who believe it. Now then, dear friend, it is for you to take heed to this, and to yield by faith to this manifestation of the power of God, and not to wait in expectation of another day of power.

You may answer, that the gospel of God's favour, and the day of opportunity lengthened out to you that you may receive the glad tidings, are not what you are waiting for—that you are waiting for another manifestation and another day of power than the gospel gives you. But we ask you why you are waiting for another manifestation and another day of power? We do not dispute that you are waiting, but we affirm that you are wrong in waiting. See, dear reader, if you can satisfy yourself that you are right in waiting for such things? What reason have you to expect them? Are they promised you? Is the present not the day of God's power to save you? Is he not at this moment infinitely willing, able, and ready to forgive all your iniquities, and receive you into his fellowship through the mediatorship of his dear Son? He is; and for you to refuse the offices of his love, and wisdom, and power as they are manifested in the Saviour, is neither more nor less than to reject Christ, and the divine power to save through him, in the vain hope that God will join you in this infatuated course, and devise another plan of salvation than that wrought out in the Redeemer!

It is no use for you to say that you do not intend rejecting the Saviour or the day of his power to save, but that you only wait for another day of God's power. We tell you again, dear reader, that the present is the day of God's saving power, and that Jesus, as revealed to you in the gospel, is his power to save you; and that you wait in vain for an addition to these. Remember that you are now aware that the present is the day of the Lord's power unto salvation. Remember, that by your continuing *unwilling*, you are excluding yourself from the people of the Lord, of whom it was said, 'Thy people shall be *willing* in the day of thy power.' And remember, finally, that the only day of God's power yet to come is a day, not of

salvation, but of wrath, 'when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that *obey not the Gospel* of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.'

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### WAITING FOR GOD'S DRAWING.

It is not less true that God draws the sinner to the Saviour, than it is that he sent his Son to be the Saviour of the sinner. If God be the Creator of the universe entire, it follows that he is the Creator of every part of it. And if God be the Author of salvation as one grand system, he is not less the author of its various parts. It cannot be denied, that the bringing of the sinner to the Saviour is so necessary a part of the economy of salvation, that had it been omitted in the scheme of mercy, the omission would have rendered it essentially defective. But though this did not appear so evidently requisite as it does, the words of the Saviour, as recorded in John vi. 44, 'No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him,' must have rendered it evident that God is alike the author of the Saviour's mission to man, and of leading the sinner to the Saviour.

We wish you, then, dear reader, to understand that you are not mistaken in supposing that God draws the sinner to Jesus. We wish you to apprehend distinctly that you, as a sinner, are drawn to the Saviour by God, if you are brought to him at all. But at the same time we wish you to understand, that *you are not required to wait on God's drawing*. Your mistake lies not in supposing that God draws you, but in the idea that you require to wait for him to do so. Our endeavour must be to show you that you are *not to wait* BUT TO LEARN, in order to be drawn of the Father to Jesus. Attend, then, if you please, to the

following principles on which God is—according both to his word and to human experience—conducting the drawing of sinners to his Son.

*First*, we have to notice that God proceeds in this matter as on all others connected with man, on principles accordant with our nature, and, therefore, best suited to accomplish the end desired. This thought we find in Hosea xi. 4: 'I drew them with cords of a man.' That is, by cords with which a man can be drawn. Not mere brute force, or physical force, but means corresponding to the nature of man as a rational and a spiritual being.

*Second*, we have to notice that the mode of the divine drawing consists in enlightenment, instruction or teaching. The Saviour, after making the statement, that no man could come to him except he were drawn of the Father, immediately adds, 'It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all *taught of God*. Every man, therefore, that hath *heard* and hath *learned* of the Father, cometh unto me.'

And *Third*, we have to notice that the teaching adopted by God to draw sinners to the Saviour is of the most persuasive, winning, and attractive character—namely that of love. Hos. xi. 4: 'I drew them with cords of a man; *with bands of love*. Jer. xxxi. 3: 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore *with loving-kindness have I drawn thee*.'

Thus, dear reader, you have before you the principles of the divine procedure in the drawing of sinners, and you have only now to learn the all-attracting lesson of love which the Father is seeking to teach you in order to come to Jesus. Now, do you ask what that lesson is, and where it is to be learned? Look, then, to Calvary. See extended on yonder cross him who said, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but—have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Learn that lesson, dear reader, receive it into your heart by faith, and thus the Father shall have drawn you to Jesus, and



you will experience the import of the Saviour's words, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.'

You see, then, that you are not to wait for God's drawing, but that you are to learn of him the truth as it is in Jesus, and so be drawn to Christ.

### WAITING FOR SPECIAL OR SAVING GRACE.

WITHOUT the special or saving grace of God, the salvation of man must have been an utter impossibility. No man ever was or can be saved but by this divine grace. We say *this* grace, because there is much grace manifested by God toward us that is not saving, was not intended to be so, and which cannot save. There is much grace shewn us by God in our creation and preservation—ininitely more than we ever think of; but great and manifold as the grace of God is in the favours of creation and providence, a special and altogether more glorious display of favour was necessary before we could speak of saving grace. Blessed be God, this has not been withheld!

In Titus ii. 11 we read, that 'The grace of God, *that bringeth Salvation*'—or the grace of God that saves—'hath appeared to all men.' If, then, we ask the question—In what has this saving grace appeared? passages almost innumerable point us to the Lord Jesus Christ as the one grand medium and manifestation of it. Take the following as examples:—Rom. iii. 24, 'Being justified freely by his grace, *through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*' Rom. v. 15, 'If, through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is by one man, Jesus Christ*, hath abounded unto many.' Rom. v. 21, 'That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, *by Jesus Christ our Lord.*' 1 Cor. i. 4, 'I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given

you, *by Jesus Christ.*' Ephes. ii. 7, 'That he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us, *through Jesus Christ.*'

From all these passages, and many others that might be cited, you will observe, dear reader, that the grace of God, which stands specially distinguished above all his other manifestations of favour as saving grace—as that grace by which the sinner is justified, sanctified, and saved—is revealed and bestowed upon us through the Lord Jesus Christ. You are, therefore, not to look for it anywhere else than in the Saviour; you can get it nowhere else than in him. Rest assured, that to expect it through any other medium, is nothing less than to perpetuate your rejection of it. Beware of deceiving yourself in the false expectation of some indefinite, unpromised something, which you merely suppose to be special or saving grace. Ask yourself, dear reader, what it is you are waiting for. Ask yourself if the marvellous favour which God has manifested toward you, in giving up his Son to die for your sins that you might live through his righteousness, is not the very grace for which you are waiting. Is there any deficiency in the favour revealed to you in the gift of Jesus? Is it not sufficient to save you? In what respect is it insufficient? Do you not see, that by it Jehovah is '*a God ready to pardon;*' and that you have simply to receive the salvation that is offered you in Christ Jesus, to enjoy and experience the special and saving grace of God?

If you imagine that God's special or saving grace is something that God *has not already done* for you, you are both mistaking what that grace is, and preventing yourself from enjoying its inestimable blessings. What more do you wish God to do than he has done? Has he not given you his beloved Son as your Saviour, and does he not declare to you that he is, at this moment, prepared to save you through him? Than this, what more do you wish? O, reader, take the divine Saviour, and be at peace; for in taking him, you have all the blessings which the grace of God can bestow.

## WAITING FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT.

WHY are you waiting for the holy Spirit, dear reader! The Spirit is waiting for you. He has been waiting on you for years. For a long while he has not only been waiting, but calling on you to accept salvation. It is the holy Spirit's earnest desire that you should now be saved. Ever since you heard the gospel, the Spirit has been striving with you. The word of God, you know, is the Spirit's voice. When you hear the gospel, you hear the Spirit's words. When you hear the gospel-story, you hear the Spirit's story—its invitations are the Spirit's invitations—its promises are the Spirit's promises—its warnings are the Spirit's warnings. For how long, then, has the holy Spirit been waiting on you, entreating you, and warning you? Yet you say you are waiting for the Spirit! What would you say of a poor blind beggar, who for years had been waited on by a benevolent physician, who was both desirous and able to open his eyes, but who was always held back from, by the blind man continually saying, I am waiting for the physician! Would this not be the climax of folly in the blind man? and would it not be most tantalising and dishonouring to the physician? Certainly it would. Well, then, not a whit less foolish, dishonouring, and tantalizing is it in you to hold back from the Saviour as you have been doing, and saying, as an excuse, that you are waiting for the Spirit. You surely see that by this plan you can never be saved. The Spirit may wait on you to the last hour of your life, as he has been doing in the past; and if you persist in holding off from the Saviour, as you have been doing, it is most certain that you shall perish in your sins, rejecting that salvation of which, all your life-time, the gracious Spirit invited you freely to partake. Why do you suppose that the holy Spirit is not willing that you be saved now? Why do you think he wishes you to wait, as you have professedly been doing? What do you suppose he must do for you, that he has not already done, or is not prepared to do, on your accepting the invitations to

a present and free pardon in Jesus, which he holds out to you? Is there any thing at all that you know of, which you feel you need, which the Spirit must bestow, but which he has not yet bestowed, or is as yet withholding? If there be any such thing, say what it is. If God the Father be willing that you be now saved, if the Saviour be willing that you be now saved, why do you suppose that the Spirit is unwilling? Can you suppose the holy Spirit to differ from the Father and the Son? Do you not perceive, that when you read the divine invitation of Isaiah lv. 1, 3—'Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money, and without price,'—'Incline your ear and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live,'—that you have the mind of the Spirit as well as that of the Father and the Son. Why, then, harbour the thought for a moment that you have to wait on the holy Spirit. As we have already said, the holy Spirit is not only waiting on, but pleading with you: Heb. iii. 7, 8, 'Wherefore, as the holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.' And as if for ever to prevent such an idea, as that you have to wait for the Spirit, from being entertained, the Spirit gives as it were a farewell invitation, in closing the sacred volume, of the most glorious, cheering, and unexceptional character, Rev. xxii. 17, 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him *take* the water of life freely.' Dear reader, how can you read this farewell invitation of the holy Spirit, and still refuse to drink that life-giving stream which he here proclaims to be free—absolutely without price—to you, as well as to every one who will have it? And, in the face of this invitation, how can you suppose that you have to wait for the divine Spirit? Would the blessed Spirit thus invite you to drink of the well of salvation, if he still withheld anything from you that was necessary in order to your possessing salvation? Are you not, by continuing heedless of the Spirit's declarations and invitations, as truly resisting him as did the Jews, to whom Stephen said, on their discrediting his

statements of the gospel, 'Ye do always resist the holy Ghost?' Certainly, you are. Instead of waiting for the Spirit, as you imagine you are doing, you are effectually resisting him; for he is waiting on you to receive the truth of the gospel, which he has long been presenting to your mind.

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### I AM DOING MY BEST.

DOING your best at what, dear reader! At endeavouring to establish your own righteousness—at working out your own justification—at mending the law which you have broken! Now, how is your best-doing to accomplish all this! Suppose you were really to do your best, and that you were even to attain to a perfect obedience to the law of God—how could that take away your past sins! and how could you be justified if they still stand against you? Your best is nothing more than you ought always to have done. To do your best from this time hence, is to do no more than the time to come requires for itself. Nothing is left over to cover past transgression. How, then, is it to be covered? How are you to be justified from sins already committed, and enough, without another act of disobedience, to ruin you for ever? Your best, you observe, takes no cognizance of past delinquency, or if it does notice it, it is only to show that you are absolutely unprepared and unfit to recover yourself from it.

But again, let it be seen what you consider by your best-doing. What do you mean by your best? Let us see how it meets the first requirement of the divine law upon you. The first expectation which a parent has of his child is love; and so the chief requirement of God upon us is love: Matt. xxii. 37, 38, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.' Now, since you speak of doing your best, how much do

you love God, according to your best doing. Perhaps not at all. Perhaps you think you are doing your best, when you succeed in banishing God from your thoughts altogether, instead of loving him supremely and constantly. Now this is quite a fair example of your best. We know it is. And what is it? Nothing but a downright neglect of your most sacred obligations! You need not deny it, dear reader. We know it to be as we have said. Your best can no more justify you than can your worst. You may as well attempt salvation by the one as the other. Your best can never do, for your best is altogether bad. What says God of your righteousness? Isaiah lxiv. 6, 'We are all as an unclean thing, and *all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*; and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.' Such, dear reader, is God's estimate, not of your sins, remember, but of your righteousnesses!

You must therefore give up attempting to establish your own righteousness. Let it go to the winds. As soon think of binding them together, as to make yourself acceptable to God by your good deeds. At once submit yourself to the righteousness of God. He has brought near his righteousness in Christ Jesus. This is your only safety. Care not how much you may have been built up under the idea of doing your best. Your best won't do. Take warning from the infatuated Jews. They were lost by attempting their best. Hear what is said of them—'They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.' Paul, on the other hand, was saved by renouncing his own deeds: Titus iii. 5, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.' Rom. x. 4, 'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' Surrender, then, dear reader—surrender to the righteousness wrought out for you by the divine Redeemer. God reckons it yours the moment you do so.

## TRYING TO GROW BETTER.

HAVING been to some extent convinced of your sin, you are endeavouring to rid yourself of it so far as to permit you to go to the Saviour with more confidence. This we suppose, dear reader, to be your state of mind. If so, you are attempting to cure yourself before you go to the physician. If an invalid were to say to you, I am very unwell, but I intend doing the best I can for myself; and having come as near a cure as possible, I will then call in the doctor. Would you not say, Go to the doctor immediately. Yet your endeavour to grow better is far more unwise than this. A patient might cure himself without a doctor's aid, but you cannot remedy your sin. The patient, in dispensing with the doctor's services, foregoes a fallible and an uncertain help; but you, in attempting your own remedy, reject a divine and an infallible Saviour. Certainly then your course is incomparably more foolish than such a one as we have supposed; for you cannot save yourself, yet you try it, and in trying it, reject a Saviour who is altogether able and willing at once to save you. Why then, dear reader, not go to Jesus now? why not give yourself up to him *just as you are*?

Do you think that the Saviour is unable or unwilling to save you as you are? or do you not wish to be so deeply obligated to him? Do you think that the saving work was left incomplete, or insufficient to meet such a case as yours? Do you not see that it takes for granted that you are just as bad as you are? Or do you not see, that by keeping back from the Saviour you have all the more to be forgiven? Though you were not to commit a single sin from this hour, still you would require to be forgiven all the past. But is it likely that you will live without sin in time coming any more than in the past? The best men on earth do not live an hour without sin, and is it probable that you will? The longer then that you defer committing yourself to the Saviour, you just require all the more forgiveness. You need more to-day than you did

yesterday, and you shall require more to-morrow than you do to-day. Besides, the greatest of sins is your keeping away from Jesus; for every hour you do so, you treat him as an impostor, and God as a liar.

But suppose that your own efforts were to improve you in some respects, as no doubt they might, what would be the result? Just this, that you would next propose doing without the Saviour altogether. The deceitfulness of your heart would unquestionably lead you to argue in this strain: I am getting sufficiently well by my own efforts; the sick, not the whole, need a physician; I am ceasing to be sick, so I do not need one; and why then should I trouble about the Saviour at all? Thus, as you supposed yourself getting better, would you gradually recede from the only source of salvation.

But again, it is utterly impossible for you to grow better till you come to Jesus. There can be no improvement which God can recognize till you are found '*in Christ*,' not having your own imperfect righteousness, but the untainted righteousness which is imputed through faith in Jesus. You may, as we have allowed, grow better in some respects—you may, as many have done, follow to a considerable extent various precepts of the Christian scriptures, either directly or indirectly, and thus greatly improve your moral character. But still you may be as far from acceptance in the sight of God as the infidel who partly appropriates the morality of the Bible, and then blasphemes the book from which he took it.

Probably your endeavour to grow better is prompted by the idea that you must do so to meet the scripture requirement of holiness or sanctification. True, it is written, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; but the question is, How is sanctification to be obtained? Now, if you think that you shall obtain it by endeavouring to be better, it is a great mistake. It is through Jesus, dear reader, that we are sanctified, just as it is by him that we are justified. In 1 Cor. i. 30 we read, that Christ Jesus 'of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' Just as God has manifested the infinitude of his wisdom through Jesus, and has



made known his righteousness through him, so does he sanctify and redeem through the Saviour. By him the believer is 'redeemed from all iniquity.' Now observe, that justification goes before sanctification. First be justified, and then sanctification follows. By faith in Jesus, righteousness is *imputed* to you, and by faith in him sanctification is *imparted* to you. There can be no sanctification where there is not first justification. Look then, dear reader, to Jesus—direct your mind toward him—keep it ever fixed on him in unwavering faith, and thus shall your sin-burdened soul be both justified and purified.

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### DOING WHAT I CAN, AND LEAVING THE REST TO CHRIST.

THIS state of mind indicates a most defective view of the truth. It looks upon the work of Christ as a mere supplement to the sinner's character. It regards the gospel plan of mercy as nothing more than a scheme to make up man's deficiencies, and it unblushingly institutes a sort of equal copartnery between the Saviour and the sinner, except that the latter gets the leading position. He does what he can, and the rest is left for the Saviour to make up. Ah! sinner, this is not the Bible doctrine of the cross. It does not represent the sinner as only somewhat deficient, and as having that deficiency made up by the Saviour. On the contrary, it represents the sinner as absolutely lost—as utterly condemned—as positively undone; and it represents the Saviour as having come, not to assist, but to 'save the lost.' It represents the sinner, not as accepting aid from the Saviour—not as taking part with him, but of yielding himself up unreservedly *to be saved*. This, dear reader, is what you have to do, you have simply *to cease attempting to save yourself*, or to take any part in being saved, further than surrendering yourself up to the Redeemer to be saved by him. 'It is a faith-

ful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save'—not to aid in saving, nor to take part in saving, but to—'save sinners.' Reader, if you accept this saying, you will give up doing what you can to be saved, and with perfect confidence commit it *all to Christ*.

But perhaps you have an idea, that the Bible associates works with faith. True; but in what way? The Bible does not tell you to work to be saved, but it tells you, *first to be saved and then to work*. The sinner is not told that his works save him, but he is told that they show whether or not he is saved. 'I will show thee my faith by my works,' says James. But you will ask, Is it not said in 2 Cor. v. 10, 'We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad.' Certainly, every one shall receive a reward according to his actions; but it is not said that any man shall be saved by them. Men are justified or condemned according as they receive or reject the Saviour: 'He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.' But while the believer is saved by grace through faith, yet he shall receive a reward according to the extent of his fidelity or his service to the Redeemer. And while the unbeliever is condemned for his unbelief, he shall be punished according to the amount and character of his sins. It is, therefore, yours, O sinner, now to receive Jesus by faith as your Saviour, and to continue faithful unto death, that you may obtain a crown of life.

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## TRUSTING TO THE MERCY OF GOD.

It is a cheering thought to us, that the great God against whom we have acted a rebel's part, is a merciful God. If, dear reader, this is your idea of God, let us con-

firm you in it. It is a right thought—God is indeed merciful. If he had not been infinitely so, long ere this both you and the writer would have been suffering the rebel's reward. Your present position, and all your past history, demonstrate the delightful thought, that Jehovah is unspeakably gracious. Science has discovered that every second of time he contributes, in more than ten hundred ways, to the happiness of each individual of our race. Think of this vast stream of mercy continued day after day for tens and scores of years; and think of it, too, as it flows to us during all that time, not only unmerited, but disregarded and sinned against in every conceivable way. Think of this, and that still the stream of blessing is made to flow, requited only by continued if not increased ingratitude and sin. Who, in view of these things, can come to any other conclusion, than that Jehovah is infinitely merciful?

But while God's dealings with us are well calculated to give us highly exalted thoughts of his goodness, yet we must remind you, dear reader, that if you stop with the teaching which is thus afforded you, your thoughts must be ruinously imperfect. You say you are trusting to the mercy of God. This evidences that you have some idea that God is merciful. But does it not also betoken that your idea is merely some general, indefinite, vague impression? Have you any idea how this mercy to which you say you are trusting is to be manifested? Do you know what you are trusting to it to do? Do you know that you are trusting to it to blot out the long, black list of sins which stand recorded against you, and which, though not visited with punishment as yet, are nevertheless unpardoned—to shield you in the hour of judgment, and acquit you at that bar from whose great and inflexible decision there is no appeal—to satisfy the divine government and the universe at large, that you should be acquitted—to purify your sin-polluted soul, and make you fit to appear in the presence of that God who cannot look upon sin and those sinless intelligences who are pure as the virgin snow? What do you say, dear reader, to all this? If your conscience confesses that you have not been trusting to

the mercy of God to do all this for you, then do you not see that you have not been trusting to it for those very things which above all others you need? What have you been trusting for, if not for the pardon of your sins, the acquittance and acceptance of your person, and the purification of your soul? If you cannot now tell that your trust is available for all this, what is it worth? But if you say that these are the very things for which you have been trusting, then say how, and on what ground do you expect the mercy of God to be thus gracious to you? Reader, you must tell how the mercy to which you are trusting can do all this—all this your case demands; and it, therefore, behoves you to see not only that that to which you are trusting *can*, but that it *will* meet in every respect your desperate emergencies. Now, reader, say, would God be just if he were to allow his mercy, without any satisfaction being rendered to his broken law, or without that satisfaction being acknowledged by you, to pass over all your sins, to treat you as righteous, when you are, in truth, altogether unrighteous—and thus to introduce your sin-contaminated and contaminating spirit among his sinless myriads? Do you not see that any such procedure would be most unwise and unrighteous, and that it is consequently a thing which God, merciful as he is, cannot possibly do. Again, then, we ask, how is that mercy to which you are trusting to do for you what your case imperatively requires?

Do you not see, dear reader, that your views of the divine mercy are utterly defective. You have been trusting to God's mercy as if it were the only attribute of his character—as if he had neither holiness nor justice—as if he had no law to administer, and no government to maintain. You cannot tell how God can be 'a just God and a Saviour.' You are expecting him to save you at the sacrifice of his justice.

Then, are you to give up the thought that God is merciful? No; but you are to receive his mercy as it flows to you through the Redeemer. It is only in the Gospel that you can learn how God can be just, and justify the sinner. And how can you trust to the mercy of God, unless you

know this? Turn, then, to Rom. iii. 25, 26, where you learn, that Jesus 'God hath set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, *that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.*' See, then, O sinner, the mercy of God streaming out to you through the Lamb of God! See God setting him forth a propitiation—a sacrifice—a satisfaction for your sins—that he might maintain his righteousness and yet pass over your transgressions—that he might justly justify you by your believing in Jesus. O, then, reader, see that your trust in the mercy of God arises solely from your faith in that blood which 'cleanseth from all sin.'

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### TRYING TO FEEL RIGHT.

It is not enough, dear reader, to feel right. Many who are miserably wrong manage to feel right. What you should aim at is to be right. Be right, and then by consequence you shall feel right. Many, because they get to feel right, imagine that they really are right, while they are on the verge of eternal ruin. It is infinitely better not to feel right, than falsely to feel so. Let us affectionately warn you, dear reader, against a mere attempt at feeling right. Let your feelings alone. To be right, you must go deeper than the feelings. The understanding must be righted first. Get right there, and you shall very speedily feel right. Get to know that you are right, and then you shall with confidence feel so. There can be no solid feeling of rightness until there is certain knowledge of being right. Infinitely better is it to cross the passage of the disturbed, awakened, and anxious conscience, though more terrific than the fiercest billows, than to sail smoothly along the calm surface of the unbroken peace that characterizes the careless soul. You cannot enter the tranquil

haven of peace with God but through the sea of conviction. It is the course of wisdom, therefore, to launch at once and brave the storm.

Do not then, fellow-sinner, attempt to dismiss the unwelcome thoughts of your sins, of God, of judgment, or of eternity. Let conscience do her work. As God's viceroy, it is hers to convict, and the sooner she is permitted to do it the better. What although you do not feel right under her revealings. The exposure must be made, sooner or later. Would you feel right if at this moment an angel were sent from heaven with the indictment of all your crimes? How, then, can you feel right under the certainty that that indictment must be served upon you before the assembled universe, unless by faith in Jesus you get it cancelled in his sin-effacing blood? Ah! poor sinner, how dare you try to feel right while the load of your sins is unremoved from off your conscience? How can you feel right so long as they are unforgiven? How can you feel right while you are liable every breath you draw to sink into the depths of hell? Do you not perceive, that to have undisturbed feelings in an unpardoned state is the very reverse of right feeling? Be not satisfied, O sinner, till you know that your sins are blotted out—till you enjoy that repose which can alone be found in the peace-speaking blood of the crucified Jesus—till you can say with heartfelt feeling, Being justified by faith, I have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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## TRYING TO PLEASE GOD.

THE thought which appears to occupy your mind, dear reader, under the idea of trying to please God is, that he is not favourably inclined toward you, but would be so under other circumstances. You suppose that if you were somewhat different from what you are at present, then God would look favourably upon you, but that as you are,

he does not do so. Under the influence of some such thoughts as these, your aim is to bring yourself up to what appears to you the given point at which God will be propitious toward you. You thus endeavour to please him with your own doings. You seek to avert his displeasure by an increase of your own good deeds. You expect to make him propitious by your own merits. Now, observe, dear reader, that we do not say that the works you may be offering to God as the price of his favour, are wrong. They may be, so far as they are in themselves concerned, right and proper; so much so, that it would be highly wrong in you to neglect them. That they are 'works of righteousness' we do not dispute. All that we now wish you to observe in regard to them is, that you expect to make God favourable or propitious toward you by them. You do not look upon him as favourable toward you now, but you hope he will become so by and by through the inducements which your works present to him. Do you see this? because it is of the first importance that you do. Mark your position—you say you are trying to please God. Now this implies two things—*first*, that you do not look upon God as already pleased, but as requiring yet to be pleased; and *second*, that it is by something in yourself—it matters not what it is, whether thoughts, or feelings, or words, or actions, it is by something of your own doing that you expect God to be rendered favourable. Now, dear reader, in both of these points you are completely wrong.

God is at this moment *a well-pleased God*: He is perfectly, infinitely propitious toward you, and that just as you are. That is—he knows you to be just such a sinner as you are—yet he is satisfied—so satisfied, for all your sins, that he requires no farther satisfaction for them whatever. Here mark expressly that he is thus propitious toward you, not on account of any thing in you, but simply and exclusively on account of the work which his dear Son has wrought out for you. God is not pleased with you in yourself; but he is well-pleased with Jesus—well-pleased with him as your Saviour—well-pleased with him for his righteousness' sake. God is satisfied with him

as the propitiation, as the satisfaction for your sins, and therefore at this very moment feels favourably toward you. It was to bring about this very state of matters that God, in the infinitude of his love, sent his Son into the world. Mark the following testimonies regarding the Lord Jesus: 1 John ii. 2, 'He is *the propitiation* for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' 2 Pet. i. 17, 'He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom *I am well pleased.*' Isa. xlii. 21, 'The Lord *is well pleased for his righteousness' sake.*'

Now, my dear friend, let us put it to you, If God really set his Son forth for the very purpose of being a satisfaction, and if God expressly declares him to be the satisfaction for your sins—and, moreover, declares himself well pleased, perfectly satisfied with the Lord Jesus as such—why do you suppose that you have to try and propitiate him? If he regards Jesus as the satisfaction for your sin, why should you not do so also? If God is satisfied with Jesus, why should you not be satisfied with him too? Mark you, this is the point to which you must come—this is the point at which you meet God in peace—all difference between you and God centres here. God looks upon his Son, and says, I am well-pleased with him—I am well-pleased with him for his righteousness' sake—I am satisfied with him as the propitiation for your every sin, O sinner. But here you are entirely passing by the work of Jesus, and saying, I will try and please God with something of my own doing. Now, when will God be pleased with you on these terms? Not certainly so long as he is pleased with his dear Son, and satisfied with his saving work. Surely, then, you see that you have nothing to do to please God, further than to be satisfied with Jesus as your Saviour, just as God is satisfied with him—that just as God declares himself satisfied with the work of Jesus, you declare yourself satisfied also; and so doing, God and you are agreed, reconciled, and at peace. The whole controversy, dear reader, which God has with you, is about Jesus—it is not about your sins—not about their number or their aggrava-



tion. God looks upon his dear Son as the satisfaction for them all, and he wishes you to be fully satisfied in the Saviour also. Surely then, you see that you require to offer nothing of your own to satisfy God; but that now you have simply to take Jesus as the satisfaction for your iniquities, and by so doing enjoy the smile of a well-pleased God.

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### TRYING TO LOVE GOD.

THAT God should be loved with the utmost of our powers of loving him; that he is infinitely worthy of our highest and most affectionate regard; that the monster-sin with which we stand chargeable, is our not loving him; and that the chief thing in religion is love to God, should ever be borne in mind. We would not, therefore, dear reader, for one moment lead you to suppose that your mind can be too deeply affected with this thought. It is quite impossible that you can have too strong ideas of the amount of love you owe to God, and as impossible that you can have too low ideas of the love which you have hitherto borne toward him. By the highest conceivable considerations you are bound to love God with all your heart, your mind, your soul, and your strength. But, alas! you have hitherto completely disregarded him, if you have not positively hated him. But now you see that you have done wrong—far, far wrong. Now you see that your great obligation is to love him. Yet your difficulty is *how you are to do it*. You have been trying, still you have not succeeded. You feel that though you ought, yet you cannot love him.

Now, does it not appear to you, that though you have been attempting a right thing, yet you have gone wrong about it? How, then, you will ask, are you to be brought to love God? In no other way, dear reader, than one. In no other way than by perceiving his love to you. It is a true saying, that 'love begets love,' and this is the secret

of all love to God. 'We love him,' says 1 John iv. 19, 'because he first loved us.' What, then, dear friend, you have to do in order to love God, is to see clearly his love to you. When you see this, you will find it quite as difficult not to love God as you have hitherto found it difficult to love him. Where, then, are you to see God's love to you? We might point you to many, many manifestations of it. We might point you to it as it is seen in the numerous capabilities for happiness with which he has furnished you—in the agreeable and delightful adaptation of nature to your wants and desires—in the sweet relations of life, and the numberless opportunities for their enjoyment which his providence has afforded you—in his giving you a law, clearly marking out the way of happiness, holiness, and life—and in his patience and great goodness toward you in the midst of your long-continued and unbroken ingratitude and sin. Still all this could give you but a faint idea of the depth of the love with which he loves you. Only in the gospel have you anything like a full exhibition of God's infinite love toward you. It is only in the gift of his well-beloved Son that you can form any adequate idea of the love of your God. 'In this,' says 1 John iv. 9, 10, 'In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' Just look, dear reader, into this exhibition of the spontaneous, disinterested love of God. See here the amazingness and the fathomlessness of its depths. Consider what these words of the apostle's convey. Think how full they are of the deepest meaning. Is it not an overwhelming thought, God sending his beloved Son—sending him away from the realms of eternal glory and felicity—sending him down to a world of sin and misery—sending him to become a child of poverty, a man of sorrows, and an acquaintance of grief—sending him to undergo a life of the deepest privation and suffering—sending him to agonize, to bleed, and to die—sending him to undergo all this for guilty, ungrateful, ruined man—sending him to bear our world's sins, in order that we

might share his righteousness, his love, his joys, and his glories. See all this love bearing full and directly *on you*. See all this done for you, just as if you were the only creature in the universe that God had to love—just as if you were the only sinner for whom his Son had to die ; see this love, we say, and tell us if you do not love God in return.

Long unaccustomed to the emotion, and not perhaps expecting that it was to be created in your heart in this way, you may be staggered at the thought, and may not at once be able to say that you feel you do love God. But do not for this be alarmed—do not suppose that what has been effectual in others, has proven fruitless in you—a little time and thought will do it all. The seed is in some soils longer of taking root than in others ; yet when it does so it is certain to spring up ; and not less certain is it that when the seed of the love of God, as it shines in the gift of Jesus Christ, is sown in the human heart, and is not cast out nor choked, but is retained and nourished—not less certain is it that it shall spring up in a full and joyous return of adoring gratitude.

Do not then think, dear reader, that you can love God by endeavouring to force yourself to do it. We cannot force ourselves to love. We must see something lovely in an object before we can love it. We must see the loveliness of God's character, as it is revealed in his love to us through the gift of Jesus, before we love him. It is by beholding this love of his that we love him back again. And when we do give his love possession of our heart, we cannot help loving him in return. Keep then, dear reader, your mind fixed on God's infinite love to you through his dear Son, and it shall not be long ere you can say, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.'

## TRYING TO REPENT; OR, SORROWING FOR SIN.

ALMOST every page of the New Testament declares the necessity of repentance in order to salvation. John the Baptist preached repentance; the Saviour declared to the Jews, that except they repented they would all perish; he enjoined his disciples to preach repentance among all nations; and the first injunction which the apostles delivered to their convicted hearers was, repent. It is no wonder, therefore, that the anxious sinner feels repentance to be a matter of deep solicitude. This we suppose, dear reader, is your case. First, then, let us ask you if you understand what it is you are seeking. If you do not, this alone must be a source of great difficulty. For surely it is a difficult, if not a fruitless and foolish thing, to seek you know not what. If you know not what you are in search of, may you not often have passed away from the object of your solicitude, and if you were to find it, how would you know it to be the thing you want? Your first step, therefore, is to understand what repentance is. Knowing this, you shall the more fully comprehend your need of it, and the better know where and how to get it.

Perhaps you have taken it for granted that repentance is sorrow for sin, and that if ever you become repentant, it must be by sorrowing sufficiently for your sins. Now, while we do not wish to make you think lightly of sin, or that it should not occasion you the most pungent regret; and while we do not for a moment give you to suppose that repentance and sorrow for sin are not most intimately connected, yet it is our desire that you understand the true relation which these two things bear to each other, and the one way in which you may experience both.

Observe, then, that our word *repentance* is derived from the French word *repentir*, to think again, or to reconsider. Now, as the result of reconsideration is change of mind, and as we do not require to reconsider anything on which we are not wrong, repentance necessarily implies a change of mind from the wrong to the right. But again, when-

ever such a change of mind takes place, there is necessarily a change of feeling following; for if the individual has been brought to a right state of mind, he cannot help being sorry for his past wrong; and the greater the wrong, and the more complete his change of mind in regard to it, just so much the more pungent and heart-felt is his sorrow.

Yet the matter does not end here; for the individual having discovered that he has been in the wrong, and being sorry for the wrong he has done, he is now more anxious to do right, and has greater pleasure in doing it than ever he had in the wrong which he formerly committed. This is the simple history of all genuine repentance. There is, first, consideration, then change of mind, then change of feeling, and then change of conduct.

It is, therefore, evidently a mistake to seek repentance either by a change of feeling or a change of conduct. Yet many attempt it in both ways. They fail to see that their mode is a direct inversion of the natural order. As every one knows, all action proceeds from motive, and all motive from thought. Accordingly, if action be sinful, there must have been sinful motive, and sinful thought. So that the way to rectify the whole, is to put that right which sets the whole in operation. What is wanted, then, in order to repentance, is right thoughts. Here now two questions arise—what right thoughts are necessary in order to produce the repentance required? and how are these thoughts to be got? To the first-mentioned it may be answered generally, whatever thoughts may be necessary to eradicate the wrong and sinful thoughts which fill the mind. Now, every unconverted man entertains, more or less, wrong ideas of God, of himself, and of the relation subsisting between him and God, of God's law, and of the transgression of it. Yet the whole may be summed up in his state of mind toward God, since to be right in this implies right on all subordinate subjects. Accordingly the apostle tells us, that the repentance which he proclaimed, was 'repentance toward God.' To the second question—where are these right thoughts to be got?—we answer, From God; for he is alike the Author of all life, goodness, grace, light, and truth; and truth, as all are aware, is the anti-

**dote to error.** Repentance, therefore, in its first element, **is of God**, as well as in the specific truth revealed to produce it, and in the dispensations by which that truth is brought to bear on the sinner. Accordingly, when Peter rehearsed to the church at Jerusalem the reception of the gospel by the Gentiles, the disciples glorified God, because that to the Gentiles also 'he had granted repentance unto life.'

We have now only to enquire how, or by what truth, does God grant repentance? We answer, by the truth as it is in Jesus. In Acts v. 31 we read, that 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand, a Prince and a Saviour, *to give repentance* to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' Here, then, it is plainly stated to be through Jesus, as the Saviour, that the sinner is brought to repentance; and this taken in connexion with the Redeemer's commission, as expressed in Luke xxiv. 46, 47, 'Thus it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name* among all nations,' it is most distinctly manifest that it is by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus, and its reception by the sinner, that he becomes the subject of this all-important change. The facts of the day of pentecost fully corroborate this—the apostle preached the gospel, then called upon the people to repent; and they who *gladly received the apostle's word*, were added to the saved. So is it in the experience of every converted person. It is by receiving the gospel testimony, that the mind, feelings, and conduct toward God are changed from the wrong to the right. It is by receiving the truth as it is in Jesus, that the sinner comes to think rightly of God, of himself, and of sin—that he comes to see God in his true character, as at once infinitely holy, just, and good; and himself as unqualifiedly unrighteous; and sin as exceeding sinful. By receiving the Gospel, he perceives the unspeakable love of God—he sees it as the all-pervading attribute of his character—he perceives it flowing out to him, the sinner, carrying before it the enmity of his heart, washing away all his sins, filling him with sorrow at ever having sinned against such a God of love, and at the same

time inspiring him with the peace of forgiveness, and the joys of salvation.

Yes, dear reader, it is by receiving into your heart by faith the gospel of the grace of God that your mind shall be completely changed toward him. By so doing, you shall experience all we have now said. Now, then, turn your thoughts to Jesus. Behold him as God's gift to you—behold him given up to death for you—behold him suffering that God might extend forgiveness to you—and your mind cannot but be changed into a right state toward Jehovah—you cannot but regard him with heartfelt gratitude—you cannot but regret ever having sinned against him—you cannot but rejoice in his love—and you cannot but be constrained to obedience by his kindness.

Do not seek repentance in any other way than this. Remember nothing else can effect your repentance. Rom. ii. 4, tells you that the goodness of God leads you to it. Yet Luke xvi. 30, 31, tells you that if you refuse the written testimony, even the resurrection of the lost would not be effectual to your persuasion. At once then, O sinner, to the gospel. Say not as some have done, that Hebrews xii. 17 teaches you that it is difficult to repent. It does no such thing—it only states the simple historical fact, that Esau found it impossible to change his father's mind, though he begged the change with tears. It says nothing of gospel repentance. Say not that God is unwilling that you repent, for Acts xvii. 30 tells you, that he commands all men every-where to do so; and 2 Pet. iii. 9 tells you, that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. When, therefore, God has given his Son, his Spirit, and his Word to bring you to repentance, how can you suppose that he is not now wishing you to repent, or that he is withholding any necessary aid whatever? O, then, sinner, now receive the soul-transforming gospel; and by so doing you shall at once experience that repentance without which you must perish for ever.

## STRIVING TO ENTER AT THE STRAIT GATE.

It is very remarkable how many incorrect ideas enter the sinner's mind, and prevent him from seeing that salvation is now, through Jesus, absolutely free to him, and only requires his acceptance to be enjoyed. A somewhat common idea of this sort is, that it is only by dint of long continued or painful striving, that peace with God can be experienced. This supposition appears to found itself on a misapprehension of the Saviour's words in Luke xiii. 24, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.' If, dear reader, you have any difficulty on this point, please attend to the following considerations.

The gate here spoken of, does not appear to be the entrance upon the christian state—not the obtaining of peace with God—but the entrance upon that state of blessedness; which commences at the close of the christian's probationary term on earth. This appears very evident from the verses immediately following, which connect with the striving to enter, the rising of the Master of the house, the shutting of the door, the standing without and knocking, the appeal to open, the disavowal from within, the professions of past acquaintance, and the final command to depart. Notwithstanding this, it will be said that the Saviour's injunction to strive refers to the present. True. We do not wish to shew that no striving is enjoined, but simply to make it appear *what is to be striven for*. Now, it is evident that it is not the present acceptance of salvation—not the present obtaining of peace with God—but that entrance into the inheritance, which forms the end of the christian state below, to which the striving refers. The striving, therefore, is rather descriptive of the christian race, or warfare, than of any effort that is necessary to obtain peace with God. The amount of the injunction is, strive, agonize, be in earnest to obtain an entrance through that gate which can admit none but



the faithful followers of the Lord, and which, when closed, can never be opened. It thus refers rather to the path of discipleship, than to that of the enquirer. This is farther supported by the language of the Saviour in Matt. vii. 13, 14, to those who were already his disciples—'Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'

But admitting that the strait gate does signify the first step in the christian state, namely, the obtaining of peace with God—what then? We are simply taught that it is strait as contrasted with the wideness of the gate of destruction. On the one hand we see Jesus, the only way to life eternal; and opposed to him the whole world, with all its philosophisings, pleasures, pursuits, and possessions, leading to endless death. And who does not see the appositeness of the contrast? But here let it be observed, that strait as the gate of life is, it is not too strait for any sinner on earth to pass its portals; and though, compared with the wide world, it is strait, yet it is an *open* gate—and open, dear reader, *for you*. And again, let it be remembered that it is not God who has made it strait. That is, there are no obstacles in the path of either the enquirer or disciple put there by God. On the contrary, God has made the crooked places straight, and the rough places plain, so that even a wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err in the way of life. Your difficulties are your own making, dear reader, and not God's. What but your own pride of heart, and love of the world, and of sin—your preference of the praise of men to the approval of God—your own unwillingness to throw aside your personal righteousness as mere filthy rags—your own reluctance to deny yourself; to forego your own name, character, and deeds; and to plead only the name and work of Jesus—what but your listening to any proposals rather than to these, are the obstacles to your immediate enjoyment of peace with God? Understand that it is your own sinful self that you have to strive against, in seeking peace with God. There is nothing whatever on God's part with which you have

to strive. He is infinitely more willing to save you than you are to be saved. He cannot be more ready or willing than he is. The only thing which prevents your being now saved, is your resisting God's method of salvation. So far from you having to strive with God, he is graciously striving with you. Hear, then, O sinner, the warning of God in Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.' Consider, that if you refuse to enter by the door of safety, which now stands open to you in Jesus, the time shall speedily revolve when the thread of life shall be snapped asunder, and with it the day of grace and opportunity shall have passed away, the door shall be shut, and you will strive to enter, and shall not be able.

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### PRAYING FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT.

MANY anxious sinners, instead of directing their thoughts to the Saviour, fix them on other objects, which, however proper and necessary in their respective places, are not what should be looked to in order to the obtaining of peace with God. Not a few of this class of enquirers have all their anxieties centred on the holy Spirit. Their whole mind is taken up in looking and praying for him. That the holy Spirit should be prayed for there can, we apprehend, be no question, and we are assured that no man can too deeply feel his need of the aid and grace of the Spirit of God. But at the same time, a man may expect the Spirit to do for him what is not his province to do—he may look to the Spirit for what he should look to the Saviour—he may maintain a position in which the Spirit cannot benefit him, in which he cannot receive the Spirit, and in which it is vain for him to pray for the Spirit. We know that many do follow such a course as this under mistaken ideas of the office of the holy Spirit—of those to whom he is given, and of the manner in which he is received.

Let us, then, first clearly understand the nature of the

holy Spirit's office in the work of salvation. From the following passages we learn most distinctly that it is that of a witness, advocate or instructor. It is his to take of the things of Christ, and shew them to men—to testify of Jesus, to advocate his claims, to instruct sinners regarding him—to convince them of their sins, of the Saviour's righteousness, and of judgment bearing thereon. Thus said Jesus, John xv. 26, 'When the Comforter—or the Advocate—is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, *he shall testify of me*;' xvi. 8-14, 'And when he is come he will reprove—or convince—the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, *because they believe not on me*; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and you see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now; but when he, the Spirit of truth is come he will guide you into all truth, for *he shall not speak of himself*; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak, and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for *he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you*.' No words could more expressly declare that the holy Spirit's mission is to bring the truth as it is in Jesus into contact with the mind of the sinner. It indeed seems as if the Saviour were desirous of warning the very class of enquirers now addressed—those who direct their attention rather to the Spirit than to the Saviour—he not only says, the Advocate shall testify of me, but he adds, he shall not speak of himself, but he shall receive of mine, and he shall show it unto you. No truth, therefore, can be more clearly established than this, that it is the holy Spirit's office to bring the saving truth before the sinner; and this being so, it follows that it is the sinner's duty, in seeking salvation, not to occupy his thoughts about the holy Spirit, but with the truth which the gracious Spirit is presenting to him.

But not only is it the sinner's duty to give all heed to the truth which the divine Spirit is presenting for his acceptance as the means of his salvation, but as likewise the means of receiving the holy Spirit. The medium of

the influence or inflowing—as the word influence signifies—of the holy Spirit into the heart of the sinner, is faith in the Spirit's testimony concerning Jesus. As we have already remarked, the holy Spirit ought to be prayed for, yet the sinner may maintain a position in which he cannot receive the Spirit, and in which it is useless for him to pray for him. While the Saviour, according to Luke xi. 13, taught *his disciples* to pray for the holy Spirit, yet according to John xiv. 17, he told them that the unbelieving world could not receive him. Such is the position of every unbeliever. A man must cease to be an unbeliever—he must cease rejecting the Spirit's testimony, ere he can receive the Spirit. All experience teaches, that the spirit of one intelligent being is imparted to another by the communication and reception of mind or testimony. When any individual wishes to convey his spirit to another, he endeavours to infuse his thoughts into that other's mind. And where his thoughts are received, there his spirit is conveyed to and possessed by the other individual, and not till then. So is it by faith in the gospel, or the holy Spirit's testimony, the truth concerning Jesus, that the holy Spirit flows into the human soul. On nothing is Scripture more explicit than on this. But let several Scripture quotations prove it. In Acts ii. 38, after the apostles, inspired by the divine Spirit, had proclaimed the gospel of Christ, and were asked by the convicted multitude what they must do, we read that Peter said unto them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, *and ye shall receive the gift of the holy Ghost.*' Here the possession of the Spirit is contingent on repentance or change of mind, and corresponding conduct toward the Redeemer. Again, in Gal. iii. 2, the apostle asks the disciples, then written to, this question—'Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or *by the hearing of faith?*' Implying, of course, that they had received him by one of these two ways. And in the fourteenth verse, he shows it to have been by faith, 'That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit *through faith.*' But again, Ephes.

i. 13 is, if possible, still more express: 'In Christ ye also trusted after that ye heard—or upon your hearing—the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, *after that ye believed—or upon your believing—ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.*' We thus find that the order of the means by which the divine Spirit is conveyed to man is, *first*, the Spirit's testimony, the gospel—*second*, the hearing of that testimony and the receiving of it by faith; and *third*, the possession or indwelling of the holy Spirit. It is thus most evident that the unbeliever, the rejector of the Spirit's truth, need not expect, much less pray for the Spirit; that in order to possess the Spirit he must receive the Spirit's testimony; that till he does so, he is resisting and doing despite to the Spirit of grace.

You, dear reader, must receive the Saviour as the Spirit presents him to you for your acceptance, if you would have the Spirit of God dwelling in you. How can you suppose that God will give you his holy Spirit, while you reject his Spirit's testimony, and the Son of his love? Why pray for the Spirit when you are refusing him by your unbelief? First give him an abode in your heart by faith, and then you shall be in a position to pray for continued and enlarged supplies of the divine Sanctifier. The Spirit is at this moment infinitely willing to take up his abode in your heart,—for this end he has long been plying you with all the resources of his providence and his word,—he has been bringing them all to bear upon your understanding, your conscience, and your heart; and the only reason why you have not enjoyed ere now his presence in your soul is simply, that you have, by the continued disbelief of his saving truth, been rejecting, resisting, and doing despite to him. See, then, that he is now waiting and praying you to receive him; and seeing this, receive him by faith in the gospel of his grace.

## PRAYING FOR CONVERTING GRACE.

WHILE all Bible readers are aware that conversion to God is essential to salvation, yet many are in great difficulty as to what this conversion is, and as to how they may become the subjects of it. In his perplexity it is not uncommon for the anxious enquirer to be found praying to God to convert him, or to give him converting grace. If, dear reader, you have any difficulty on this subject, we trust the following remarks shall meet your case.

Conversion simply signifies, Turning—to convert, is to turn; to be converted, is to be turned. Conversion to God, therefore, is the sinner turning from his errors to God. Hence such passages as 1 Thes. i. 9: ‘Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.’

There is no passage in the Bible which teaches that the unconverted is by his prayers converted to God. It is not by prayer that God converts the sinner. The grace which converts the sinner to God is communicated not through prayer, but through the gospel. Such, in fact, is the very purpose of the gospel ministry, as is manifest from the commission delivered by the Redeemer to the apostle Paul, as given, in his own words, in Acts xxvi. 17, 18: ‘Unto the Gentiles now I send thee to open their eyes and to turn *them* from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified through faith that is in me.’ Here we have not only the fact, that it is through the medium of the gospel that God turns the sinner to himself; but we have the Saviour’s own definition both of conversion itself, and of the blessed results which flow from it.

See then, dear reader, your duty in this unspeakably important change. Do not suppose that you have to pray to God to convert you, or that you have to pray to him for converting grace. God, in his desire to save you, has already instituted the means of your conversion. That grace by which you may be turned from your sins to God,

he has already bestowed in Jesus Christ, and revealed to you in his gospel. God is, therefore, seeking your conversion, and so you do not need to pray to him to convert you. What you have to do, is to believe that gospel by which he is graciously endeavouring to win you to himself as a trophy of his love. The passages already quoted prove this to you; but, by way of further proof, observe what is said in Acts xi. 20, 21. The disciples 'spake unto the Grecians, *preaching the Lord Jesus*. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number *believed and turned unto the Lord*.' Now, dear reader, all that is wanted in order to your conversion to God is for you to believe the gospel of Jesus. Believe what God, through his holy Spirit, declares, namely, that he loves you—so loves you that he gave up his beloved Son to die for your sins. Believe this, and you cannot but be turned from those sins which are so hateful in the sight of God, that nothing less than the death of Jesus could sufficiently express his abhorrence of them; believe this, and you cannot but be turned to that God whose love to you was so intense, that nothing less than the surrender unto death of the Son of his love could make known to you its intensity. Test the gospel, dear reader, in this way. You are aware that it is true, why then not believe it? Do so, then, and you shall speedily feel its converting power.

What other converting grace, than you have in the gospel, do you expect? How do you expect God is to convert you if not by the gospel of his grace? Be assured, that if you are not converted by the gospel, you shall never be converted at all. The words of Matt. xiii. 15, shall describe your state—'This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them?' O reader, take warning from this, by fleeing at once to Jesus.

## PRAYING FOR A NEW HEART.

God declares, that the human heart is 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' The strongest language that could be employed to describe the inveteracy of its sinfulness God has used. He sees it to be so completely depraved, polluted, and abandoned, that he not only declares it to be hard and obdurate, but absolutely petrified—he affirms it to be a heart of stone. No figure could more terribly express its defection than this. Yet this is the deliberate verdict of Jehovah. It is certain, therefore, that we cannot form too low an estimate of its depravity. Perhaps, dear reader, you feel, in some measure, the truth of God's verdict, and are ready to exclaim with one of old, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God! and renew a right spirit within me.'

With this feeling, then, we suppose you to be seeking a new heart—a heart of flesh—a heart that will receive and reciprocate the love of God, approve what he approves, and hate what he abhors. But how is such a heart to be got? How is such a transformation as the renewing of your hard and stony heart into a feeling, sympathising, grateful, rejoicing, sanctified heart of flesh to be accomplished? God, we say, must do it. To this you assent, and therefore you say that you are praying to him for it. But here let us ask—is it by the sinner's prayer that God creates within him a new and purified heart? Where is it said so? Nowhere in the word of God. It is by faith, not prayer, dear reader, that God re-creates the sinner's heart. It is by faith, therefore, that you must seek a new heart. It was by faith that God renewed the hearts of sinners in apostolic times; and his ways are unchangeable. Listen to Acts xv. 7-9: 'Peter rose up and said, Men and brethren, ye know how that, a good while ago, God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God who knoweth the hearts bare them witness, giving them the holy Ghost even as he did unto us; and put no difference between



us and them, *purifying—or having purified—their hearts by faith.*'

Here, then, it is most plainly intimated that it is by faith in the word of the gospel—and not by prayer—that God purifies the polluted heart of man. The apostle manifestly refers here to the great and fundamental change of which we have been speaking. He does not refer to a merely superficial or partial reformation in the persons spoken of, but of their true conversion from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. He says, that God who knows the heart bare them witness—gave them the holy Spirit, and put no difference between them and those previously renewed in heart. It is indisputable, therefore, that the change in the hearts of those persons was radical and complete. Mark, then, that it was produced, not by their prayers, but by the belief of the word of the gospel.

If, then, dear reader, you are in earnest for a new heart, take God's way of getting it. Forthwith direct your thoughts to the gospel. There God reveals to you his heart of love. There he commends it to you in the gift of his dear Son. There he calls upon you to look at it, and to let it glow upon your cold, icy, hardened heart. O, then, sinner, behold by faith the suffering, dying Jesus—behold him dying under the load of your transgressions—behold him as the manifestation of the love of God to you—behold him thus by faith, and your stony heart will give way beneath the power of the divine compassion, and its hitherto dormant affections will burst forth into living and holy gratitude to that God whose heart is a heart full of love to you.

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### PLEADING THE PROMISES.

Do you understand, dear reader, what you are about when you say that you are pleading the promises? Have you any distinct idea in your mind in doing this? What

do you understand by the promises, and what do you mean by pleading them? What promises do you refer to? Is there any promise that God has given you, that he has not fulfilled? If there be any such promise, what is it? And if you do not know of any such unfulfilled promise, why are you pleading that it be fulfilled? We put these questions to you, not because it is wrong to plead God's promises, but because it is not unlikely that you may be pleading for what God has not promised, or for what he has not promised to any in your present position; or for what *he has already given*. You can easily suppose the following—that you may be thinking that certain things are promises that are not promises—that you may be asking for things which God never promised, nor intended to give, to persons in your circumstances—that you may be asking for what, if given you in your present position, would not meet your necessities—that you may be asking for things which God, in his infinite wisdom, knows would not be good for you—that you may be asking for things which, in your present state you could not receive—and above all, that you may be asking for what *God has already given*, and what is really the thing you need. So that by forgetting this you are keeping yourself in needless and painful suspense, and away from the blessing that you are in search of. This we apprehend, dear reader, is your very case. Let us see if it be not. Let us enquire if God has not already given just what you need and want.

What is it, dear reader, that you are pleading for? What is it that you want? You want something that can quiet your conscience, troubled as it is in view of your sins—you want something to remove them from between you and your Maker and Judge—you want something that can give you peace with God—you want something to inspire you with confidence in prospect of death, judgment, and eternity—you want something to save you, now and for ever. This, we know, is what you *need*. Say, is it not the very thing you are pleading for? It is.

Now, then, the question for you is—*has God given this?* We rejoice, dear reader, to be able to say—he has. In the gift of Jesus, *he has given* all this. Let us, then, prove it.

From the first hour of man's sin, God promised a Saviour. And in regard to Jesus as the promised Redeemer, what says the Apostle in Acts xiii. 32, 33? 'We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, *God hath fulfilled.*' And what says he to the Ephesian disciples ii. 12-14? 'At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise; having no hope, and without God in the world. But now, *in Christ Jesus*, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ; for he is our peace.'

Here, then, it is manifest, that the very things you are pleading for *are already given*—given in Jesus. You are, therefore, not to plead for them, but to *take them*. It is yours, not to pray that they *may be* given, but to *believe* that they *are* given. 'This is the record, that God *hath given* to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life.' O, then, anxious sinner, now accept God's gift in Jesus. Consider that it is only by so doing that you can inherit the promises. Gal. iii. 29 tells you that if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and an heir according to the promise. 2 Cor. i. 20 tells you that all the promises of God in Christ are yea, and in him, Amen. Ephes. iii. 6 tells you that it is by the gospel that you become a partaker of God's promise in Christ. Why, then, not accept the promised blessing in the promised Saviour at once? Why stand aloof, pleading for what is given? O, sinner, be wise by forthwith accepting Jesus, in whom all the promises are yours.

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### PRAYING GOD TO BE RECONCILED.

If, dear reader, you are praying God to be reconciled, you are committing a great mistake. You are committing a heavy wrong on the divine character; and you are over-

looking one of the most delightful truths of the gospel. Do you not know that God does not require to be entreated to be reconciled? Do you not know that *God is praying you to be reconciled*? Do you not know that this is the very object of that gospel to which you have been privileged so long to listen? What is the gospel, but an entreaty from God for you to cease your enmity and strife, and forthwith to enter into his favour and fellowship? What do you imagine the gospel to be, dear reader, if you do not see that it is an exhibition of God's infinite desire for your reconciliation—if it does not lay before you the plan of reconciliation—if it does not press upon you the terms of reconciliation—if it is not God's prayer to you to be reconciled? If it is not all this, what is it? What have you supposed it to be? Where has it taught you that you must pray God to be reconciled? There is no such doctrine to be found in it. No, dear reader, no. The gospel comes to you as the combined entreaty of Father, Son, and holy Spirit, for you to be reconciled to God.

But that you may see that this is the doctrine of the Bible, hear 2 Cor. v. 18-21. 'God,' says the apostle, 'hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit that God was in Christ *reconciling the world unto himself*, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, *be ye reconciled to God*. For he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Observe, now, the various facts here stated, and you cannot fail to see, that instead of you having to pray God to be reconciled to you, he is actually at this moment praying you to be reconciled to him. Notice, then, *first*, that God reconciled the apostles to himself by Jesus Christ; *second*, Having done so, he gave to them the ministry, or service of reconciliation; *third*, That this ministry consisted in the exhibition of the fact, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, by not imputing to men their trespasses; *fourth*, That the apostles were, therefore, ambassadors for

Christ—God did by them beseech men, and they in Christ's stead did pray men to be reconciled to God; and *lastly*, The reason why they and God occupied that imploring position toward the sinner, namely, that God had made him who knew no sin to be a sin-offering for us, in order that we might be made the righteousness or the justified of God in him.

We implore you, then, O sinner, not to forget how you stand before God—we beseech you not to imagine that you require to plead with him to be reconciled—we pray you to see that he is pleading with you to be so—and we entreat you to observe the grounds on which he is doing so—that he made the sinless Jesus a sacrifice for your sins, that it might be no longer necessary for him to impute them to you, and that you might stand freed and justified from them all. Remember that God has done the same to save you that he did for Paul, and that if Paul in Rom. v. 10 could say to the Roman believers, 'If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life,' nothing should hinder you from now taking up the same language and the same position? We pray you in Christ's stead, dear reader, be ye reconciled to God.

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### THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

God is a sovereign. He is so in the highest sense of the word. His is an unlimited, absolute sovereignty. To none can the term sovereign so fully and appropriately apply as to Jehovah. His, indeed, is the only uncontrolled and perfect sovereignty in existence. Sovereignty is inseparable from Deity. We cannot suppose the latter without the former. There is, therefore, no doctrine more manifestly a doctrine of divine revelation than that of the divine sovereignty.

While the idea of sovereignty commends itself to every

mind as an essential attribute of divinity; yet to the sinner there is perhaps no relation in which the Divine Being appears so terrible as in his sovereign relationship. This undoubtedly arises in many cases from proper considerations. The idea of divine sovereignty is in itself an overwhelming thought, and when this idea enters the mind of one who knows himself to be a transgressor against the Sovereign Jehovah, and to be exposed to the vengeance of his power, unmitigated by the knowledge of his saving love, no idea can be more truly appalling. Still there is a mistaken idea often confounded with the sovereignty of God in relation to the sinner, which gives it a false, cruel, fearful, and unnatural intensity. It is to the correction of this perplexing and painful mistake that we now proceed. The error to which we refer is, that of misconceiving what sovereignty is *in itself*, and of misapprehending the *character* of the sovereignty of God. Have you not, dear reader, been labouring under this mistake? Have you not been supposing that a sovereign is a tyrant in power? Have you not been altogether misapprehending the character of God's sovereignty? Have you not, in regarding God as a sovereign, looked upon him as an all-powerful, relentless, vengeful, capricious, immoveable Despot? Have you not entertained the thought that God's sovereignty consists in having created a portion of his creatures and forced them into sin, simply that he might with a pretext launch them into perdition? If any such thoughts have perplexed your mind, it must be a relief for you to know that sovereignty is no such thing as you have supposed; and, especially, that the divine sovereignty is the very opposite of these imaginings.

Sovereignty consists simply in doing *according to pleasure*. God's sovereignty consists in his doing just *as he pleases*. We have distinct declarations of God's sovereignty in Psalm cxv. 3, and Rom. ix. 15, 'Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.' 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' Here be it observed, we have but a simple statement of sovereignty. We are not told, so far as these passages are concerned,

what the *character* of God's sovereignty is. We must refer to other passages to know whether the divine sovereignty is good or bad, righteous or tyrannical, merciful or severe. We have this question answered in *Exod. xxxiv. 6*, where Jehovah declares his own character as, 'The Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.' This being the character of God, it is of necessity the character of his sovereignty; for, besides the fact that this declaration of character was made when about to exercise the prerogatives of sovereignty, it is impossible that God can have another character as sovereign than his own, as here expressed by himself.

Such, dear reader, is the character of the Sovereign Jehovah; and O how different is it from the fearful thoughts you have been harbouring against him? Say, is it not a cheering thought to you to know that, sinner as you are, you have to do with a Sovereign so infinitely gracious, as your God here declares himself to be? In view of this declaration, can you continue to doubt or suspect his goodness? Can the thought of his sovereignty any longer fill your heart with distraction and dismay? Seeing that you are assured of its gracious character, is it not now as pleasing a thought to you, as it has hitherto been terrible? But if God's own declaration of his character is not sufficient to dispel your distrust of him, consider that all his dealings with you afford the most perfect corroborations of it. Think of his oath, that he has no pleasure in your death: *Ezek. xxxiii. 11*, 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.' Think of his long-sparing goodness toward you during all the course of your prolonged distrust and disobedience. Harken as he appeals to you in *Rom. ii. 4*, whether you despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that his goodness leads you to repentance; and above all, think of the brightest exhibition of sovereign mercy which it was possible for him to give you—think of his having been pleased to bruise his well-beloved Son, and make him an offering for your sins.

Such, O sinner, are the acts of God's sovereignty. View it therefore through all these illustrious manifestations, and

you cannot fail to rejoice in it as a theme fraught with the most sublime and consoling truth, even to you, sinner, as you are. See it as it is, and you will exclaim with the Psalmist, 'Jehovah reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad.'

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### THE DECREES OF GOD.

It is the part of God, as a Sovereign, to pass decrees. All sovereigns require, more or less, to do so, and especially necessary must it be with the Supreme Governor of the universe. The decrees passed by any sovereign invariably correspond with the character of the monarch passing them. If the sovereign is wise, just, and merciful, so are his decrees; but if he is imprudent, unrighteous, and merciless, his decrees partake of the like characteristics. According to this rule, we have, in the character of God, the key to the nature of all his decrees. God being an all-wise, righteous, and gracious sovereign, it of course follows that all his decrees are the result of his infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness. We cannot suppose that God would pass any decree without first bringing to bear upon it his boundless resources of knowledge and prudence. Every earthly sovereign, who deserves the name of a wise ruler, lays all his resources of information under contribution in passing his decrees—he looks all around him, and as far forward as he can, and has all plans early and well prepared. And precisely so does God conduct his government. His omniscience giving him to see to the farthest end of the vista of time, and to take cognizance of all its contingencies, the Scriptures tell us that the divine plans are developed 'according to the foreknowledge of God,' and 'according to the eternal purpose.' And we do not think that any one can suppose that it would have been like the all-wise Being not to have exercised his omniscience, and not from the begin-



ning to have purposed and determined as he saw best. Now, just as God's attribute of wisdom leads us to expect that he would from the beginning exercise his foreknowledge, and at the outset, predetermine his mode of operating, and foreordain whatever he saw to be best calculated to accomplish his purposes; so, his attributes of justice and mercy teach us that his purposes resolved upon, and his decrees enacted for their accomplishment, must be purposes and decrees of righteousness and goodness. Hence such descriptions of God's government as Psalm lxxxix. 14, 'Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before thy face.'

But this will appear to demonstration, when we consider what the decrees of God are. In instituting this inquiry, we do not, of course, refer to God's decrees respecting the material universe, but in regard to man, as the subject of his moral government. We remark, then, that the decrees of God do not consist in his having foreordained the actions of men, but in his having decreed the laws and measures by which their conduct should be regulated, and they themselves finally judged. As this is a fundamental principle in the divine government, we beg your particular attention, dear reader, to it. We beg you to observe that it is the part of a sovereign not to decree the actions of his subjects, but to decree laws and measures for their welfare and guidance. This is precisely what the divine decrees are. God has not decreed men to do what they do, for their doings would then be God's ordinance, whatever their character. But God has decreed laws, by which they are required to regulate their conduct—he has foreordained measures for the wellbeing of his creatures; and he has predestinated their destiny in accordance as they obey his laws, and receive or reject his measures. All that is necessary to prove this, is to take a scriptural survey of God's decrees.

First, then, to refer to God's primordial decree regarding man—that of Eden—expressed in Gen. ii. 15-17. Here God requires a single test of man's allegiance to his Maker. Now, was it too much of God to require this one test of man's fidelity? Certainly not. Observe, then, in what

the decree consisted—what it fixed. Did it foreordain our first parents' conduct? No, it did not predestinate their actions. It was simply a law regulating them; and only predetermined a reward or punishment accordant with the conduct that might be pursued. Now this is just what the decrees of every well governed state do—they do not necessitate conduct, but regulate it by precept, and reward it according to its merits.

Take next the decrees of God's second dispensation to man—the moral law. Does it make requirements contrary to God's wisdom, justice, and goodness? No; for it would neither be wise, nor just, nor good in God not to require his creatures to love him, and to love one another. But does it necessitate man's actions? No; for man has done the very opposite of what God decreed him to do. It is simply an ordinance by which man should regulate his conduct, and which sets before him the different results which it predestinates to follow opposite modes of action. Hence says Moses regarding the matter, in Deut. xxx. 19, 'I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore *choose life*.'

Now, to pass on to the third, or Christian dispensation, is there anything in it in contrariety with the ideas of wisdom, justice, and mercy? Is it not, in fact, the most sublime exhibition conceivable of the three combined? Is it not written respecting the development of God's purpose in Christ, that in him he has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; and that mercy and truth are met together, and that righteousness and peace have kissed each other? Indeed it is in the development of the divine plans, as we have them revealed in the Saviour, that we have anything like adequate conceptions of the infinitude of the wisdom, justice, and mercy of God, and that in harmonious combination and display. O, reader, if you would have proper ideas of these glorious attributes of the character of your God, behold them as they are manifested to you in the devising, determining, and carrying out, in the fulness of time, by the surrender of the Well-beloved as a sin-offering for you, a plan by which it might be right and

safe in God to forgive you, and treat you as if you had never sinned. Now, do any of the divine decrees, in Jesus, predestine the sinner's conduct? Is there within the compass of the scheme of mercy any such decree? If so, where is it? Is God's foreordination of the Saviour not a measure that leaves the sinner's acting perfectly optional? Is it not a measure which sets before him life and death? Does it not press life upon his acceptance, and warn him against refusing it? Does it not prove just what we have said, that God, as a Sovereign, has not decreed his creatures' conduct; but laws and measures by which to regulate their conduct—by which best to secure their well-being—and by which, not antecedently, but finally, to determine their destiny. Hear, O reader, the decree—'He that believeth on the Son, hath life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.'

Such, dear reader, is the nature of the decrees of God. He has not decreed you to do what you do—he has not predestinated you to a line of conduct from which you cannot deviate. But he has decreed a law, setting before you life and death, and by your disobedience 'the commandment which was ordained to life' has become death to you. But again, the wisdom, righteousness, and mercy of God have been combined on your behalf, and now the decree of endless life and glory is proclaimed to you, making these yours on your accepting them in Jesus.

But perhaps you are inclined to say, But, sir, what of the secret decrees of God? Well, friend, what of them? Who told you of such things? If any one has told you of them, how did he come to know of them? If any one knows of such decrees, how are they secret? They cannot be secret if they are known, and if they are not known, how comes any one to speak of the existence of such decrees? But if there be such, we ask you, can they contradict God's revealed decrees? Is it anything short of blasphemy, to say that God has secret decrees which do not harmonise with his revealed decrees? Is it not to charge God with duplicity? Do not, then, dear reader, harbour such a thought for a moment; but at once fall

in with the decree of life as given you in the gospel, and so doing, you are as safe as the government of the Eternal.

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**PREDESTINATION; OR, IF I AM TO BE SAVED  
I SHALL BE SAVED.**

THIS question is very much like the one just discussed. The chief difficulty generally felt regarding this question, we apprehend to be, that the destiny of the individual is already irrevocably fixed, irrespective of conduct or character. Hence the not uncommon expression, If I am to be saved I shall be saved. This remark in itself, as any one may see, is a mere truism, and has actually no meaning in it. One might as well say, If I am to be rich, poor, honoured, despised, indolent or industrious, I shall be so; but it would at once be seen to be a mere meaningless *if*. But as generally employed, in regard to salvation, it assumes a fearfully erroneous supposition. It evidently assumes, that it is already determined, that a certain and fixed number of persons shall be saved—it assumes that they are quite passive, and have no responsibility in the matter—it assumes that their salvation is determined upon, irrespective of character in themselves, and it even assumes that their salvation may be thus determined upon without them so much as being aware of it.

There is no such doctrine, dear reader, as this in the Bible. There is the doctrine of predestination or foreordination, but there is no such fatalistic idea as that couched in the phrase, 'If I am to be saved I shall be saved.' The word of God clearly states that God has predestinated or pre-appointed certain things, but it nowhere says that God has predetermined the salvation of a given number of sinners irrespective of their character, nor that he has fore-doomed any number of sinners, but those who,

by their wilful rejection of salvation, include themselves in the number of the condemned. But the best way to prove this is to refer to the passages of scripture that allude to the subject.

*First*, then, Roman iii. 25 states that God set forth, or foreordained Jesus to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past. Certainly then, there is no such fatalistic doctrine here, but in truth its very opposite. *Second*, 1 Pet. i. 20 declares that the Messiah, as a lamb without blemish and without spot, was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you. For whom? '*You, who by him believe in God.*' Here is the statement of the previous passage exactly corroborated. *Third*, Romans viii. 29, 30, says 'Whom God did foreknow, that is, approved in past times—he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.' Ver. 28 states who these were—'*Them that love God;*' as, for example, Abraham the friend of God. That the term here rendered foreknow, does not signify mere foreknowledge, is evident from the 30th verse which goes on to say, that those thus foreknown, or foreapproved, were not only predestinated to be conformed to the image of Jesus, but called, justified, and glorified persons. The apostle's doctrine in this passage is, that all things work together for good to those who love God; and his proof is God's proceeding towards those who had in past times borne this approved character—they God had predestinated to the likeness of his own dear Son; he had called them into his own family, justified them and glorified them. This is God's purpose towards those who love him, and consequently any man who becomes a lover of God is included in this purpose. This passage, therefore, does not teach that any man is shut up from the blessings of salvation by the divine purpose of predestination. *Fourth*, in Ephes. i. 5, and 11, the apostle says, '*Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ;*' 'in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.' Here the

doctrine is, that it was God's purpose to predestinate men to the adoption of children *by Jesus Christ*; and Gal. iii. 26 informs us that this predestination into the family and inheritance of God takes effect by faith in Jesus—'Ye are all the children of God *by faith in Christ Jesus*.' Here again, then, the blessings of predestination are seen to be open to every gospel hearer, and that by faith in the Lord Jesus, the sinner, be who he may, is adopted into the participation of them. *Fifth*, Acts xiii. 48, is supposed from the words, 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed,' to teach that those who believe on the Saviour do so in virtue of being fore-ordained by God to believe. But the word here rendered *ordained*, signifies *disposed for*. There is no preordination on the part of God here spoken of; but, on the contrary, that state of mind or disposition in the persons themselves, which the narrative so aptly contrasts with the disposition of those who judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life. The narrative describes two parties—one that was disposed against the gospel and rejected it, and the other that was disposed for it and believed it. *Sixth*, In 1 Pet. ii. 8, we are told that to those who believe, the Saviour is precious; but that to the disobedient he is a stumbling-stone and rock of offence. But the words—'even to those who stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed'—are imagined to teach that God has appointed some men to disobedience. But the very idea is a contradiction of itself. For if a man is appointed to disobey, and he does disobey, then he is not disobedient, for he does the very thing he was appointed to do! The apostle's doctrine is, that the disobedient are appointed to fall. His words, 'being disobedient', are introduced, explaining the cause of any being appointed to fall; that is, it is God's appointment that those who believe on his Son shall rise to eternal life and glory, and that those who disobey shall fall into endless perdition. We have the decree, as given by Jesus himself, in Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' Thus it was said of Jesus, that he was set

for the rise and fall of many. And, reader, you must determine for yourself, whether you shall rise or fall by him. *Seventh*, Acts iv. 28, and ii. 23, are regarded as teaching that God predestinated the Jews to put Jesus to death as they did. Neither passage says so. The first says, 'They were gathered together to do whatsoever God's hand and counsel determined before to be done;' and the second one says, 'That him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, they took him, and by wicked hands crucified and slew him.' It is not said that the parties who crucified the Saviour were predestinated to do it, but simply that God had determined that Jesus should die for man, and foreknowing that if he were but placed amidst the wicked rebels, they would put him to death, determined to deliver him. Thus said Jesus in Mat. xvii. 12, 'They have done unto Elias *whatsoever they listed*, likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.' By thus placing Jesus in the power of men, God effected the means of man's salvation; and thus it is that God brings good out of evil, and makes the wrath of man to praise him. *Lastly*, Jude 4 is regarded as teaching that some men are preordained by God to a course of ungodliness and consequent condemnation. But the words here rendered, '*before of old ordained to this condemnation*,' simply signify that the conduct of such persons was in ancient scriptures *written of and condemned*. The word here rendered *ordained*, does not signify *decreed*, but *written*; and verse fourteen names the prophet who did so—Enoch, the seventh from Moses, prophesied of these, and that, be it observed, condemnatorily of their conduct.

We have then, dear reader, gone over all the passages which we can suppose you to have any difficulty with, and we have shewn you that not one of them teaches the doctrine, either that your conduct is predestinated, or that your destiny is foreordained irrespective of your conduct and character. We have shewn you that God's purpose of predestination was first to foreordain his Son as a Saviour for men, and then to predestinate those who believe in him unto the adoption of children. It is thus in the first instance by Christ Jesus on God's part, and in

the second by faith in him on man's part, that sinners become the called according to God's purpose, and partakers of the inheritance of the sons of God. The blessings of gospel predestination are therefore as free to you as the air of heaven. They are revealed and offered to you in the gospel. There is nothing shutting you out from them, but your own rejection of them by unbelief. If you would now but admit the love of God into your heart by faith in Jesus, you would at once enter the list of those who love God—for whom all things work together for good—who are the called according to his purpose—whom he has predestinated to the likeness of his own dear Son—whom he nominates his children—whom he justifies and whom he glorifies.

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### IF I AM ONE OF THE ELECT I SHALL BE SAVED.

WHILE this proposition is correct so far as it is itself concerned, yet the idea it is employed to express is dangerously inaccurate. It is true that the elect are saved persons; but this is not the idea which the words, 'If I am one of the elect I shall be saved,' are employed to express. The phrase assumes that salvation hinges upon election; and that an individual may be one of the elect without any knowledge of it, and consequently may be quite safe, although altogether uncertain and unconcerned regarding salvation. We shall endeavour to prove that any such notion as this is by no means the Bible doctrine of election.

Then let it be observed, *first*, that to elect, is to choose, to pick out, to separate—that election is the act or process of choosing, picking out, or separating—that an elect person or thing, is one chosen, picked out, or separated. Let it be observed, *second*, that in the Bible there are various sorts of election spoken of, as, (1.) That of the Messiah to



the mediatorship: Isaiah xlii. 1, 'Behold mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth;' (2.) That of the family of Israel, as the custodiers of the law of God, and the progenitors of the Messiah concerning the flesh: Rom. ix. 11, 'The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;' (3.) Regal election: Deut. xvii. 15, 'Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose.' But passing other sorts, as civil, municipal, and ecclesiastical, we come to observe particularly gospel election—that choice which God makes of men in regard to salvation. It is this we have to do with; and we simply allude to the other descriptions of election as illustrative of that of the gospel, and to shew that all the passages in the Bible that speak of election, do not refer to the election connected with the salvation of the soul. In regard, then, to this, we solicit your attention, dear reader, to the following scriptural particulars of it.

1st, It is eternal in this respect, that from the beginning believers were chosen *in Christ*—2 Thess. ii. 13, and Ephes. i. 3, 4, 'God hath, from the beginning, chosen you.' 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in spiritual things *in Christ*, according as he hath chosen us *in him* before the foundation of the world.' Now the question here arises—what is meant by one party being chosen in another? Take an example—God chose the Jews in choosing Abraham—they were chosen in Abraham. But how? Simply because God, in choosing Abraham to be the head of that family, chose all who, in process of time, became connected with him, in terms of the purpose of that election. So is it with the believer; he is chosen in Christ—God chose him in choosing the Messiah; because in choosing Jesus as the head of the Christian family, he chose all who, in process of time, became connected with him, in terms of the purpose of this election. Enquirers, by overlooking the little, though important words, '*in him*,' of Ephes. i. 4, get into a labyrinth of perplexity and error. We beg you, then, dear

reader, to observe, that the passage would not express the mind of the Spirit without these words. No man is elect *out* of Christ. It is *in* Jesus that election, and all the treasures of salvation, are hid; and no man not in Christ is the possessor of one of them. Just as the man who is not in Christ, is unsaved and unjustified, so is he non-elect; and just as the man who is in Jesus is justified and saved, so is he elect, or chosen of God. Now, it cannot be, that a man can be at once chosen of God and yet condemned; and if justification be by faith, so must election be through faith. Thus the doctrine that the elect were always in Christ, is not only perplexing, but contrary to the great doctrine of justification by faith. Besides being opposed to the dictates of reason, and revelation on the subject, since man had no being in eternity, and then there was no mass or body from which to choose or separate the elect. A moment's reflection proves this. But the apostle settles the question when he speaks, in Rom. xvi. 7, of those who were in Christ before himself, which could not be if the elect were always in Christ. In no other sense, therefore, can it be true that men were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, than in the choice then made of Jesus as the chief of the elect.

2d, Gospel election is therefore a matter of time, in this respect, that the union of the Saviour and the sinner is effected in time. How otherwise are the statements of 1 Peter i. 2, and 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14, correct? Observe them, dear reader. 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.*' 'Because God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, *through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you by our gospel.*' Here election is said to be 'according to the divine foreknowledge,' shewing that if God foreknew it—as he did all the events of time—it must be an event of time. Again it is said to be effected through, or by means of, the sanctification of the Spirit—that sanctification which is, or leads unto, the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ—that sanctification which is conjoined with the

belief of the truth—that truth unto which God calls men by the gospel.

Now, it is self evident, that if men are chosen through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth, they are not chosen till they believe the truth, and have the sanctification of the Spirit, except ‘in Christ,’ as we have already seen.

Here then, dear reader, you have the scripture doctrine on this sublime subject, and we trust you see its consistency with the teaching of Scripture in general, and the facts, offers, and requirements of the gospel in particular. We beg of you not to perplex yourself with the fearful idea, that God may have passed you by in the councils of a past eternity; nor to delude yourself that he may then have chosen you in yourself, out of Christ, as you still are, and consequently that you may remain indifferent to the gospel of his grace. We beseech you to observe, that in the gospel you find God calling you into the family of the elect. By the gospel he is seeking to bring you to the belief of the truth—to experience the sprinkling of that blood upon your conscience, which was freely shed for you, and which speaks peace to your guilty soul—to bring you down in obedience to it—and to obtain the sanctification of the Spirit—by all which you become one of the elect of God. See this, dear reader, we pray you; and, by faith in Christ Jesus, become one of the chosen, separated, adopted children of Jehovah.

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### IF I COULD ONLY KNOW WHETHER I AM ONE OF THE ELECT.

WHY do you not know, dear reader, whether you are one of the elect? Do the Scriptures not plainly tell who are God’s elect? Do they not as distinctly tell who are the elect, as who are the pardoned, the justified, the saved? Certainly they do. Why then say—If you could only

know. If you do not know, what hinders you from knowing? Perhaps you never thought of enquiring; but you must admit, that if God's word tells who the elect are, it is your duty and wisdom to learn this at once. O but, Sir!—you may say—I do not think we can know; is it not one of God's secrets?—and how, then, can we expect to know it? Secret things belong to God, but things only that are revealed to us—is it not my part, therefore, to leave this matter entirely to God? Certainly we should leave this matter entirely to God, if this be one of God's secret things—if he has not revealed his mind upon it; but if he has revealed the matter, then we ought to enquire, What saith the Lord, and not remain either in doubt or perplexity. Now, then, are you sure that this is one of God's secret things? No, you are not. God must have revealed something about election, or how do you know that there is any such thing in the gospel economy? The fact that we speak about gospel election, and firmly believe in it, proves that God has revealed something about it. Now, then, as revealed things belong to us, it is your immediate duty to satisfy yourself as to what God says on the subject; and if possible to know whether you are one of the elect, or how you may become one.

Observe, then, dear reader, that the Scriptures not only speak of election, and reveal God's purpose and plan therein, but show that it is known to us whether or not we are chosen of God. The apostles had no difficulty in addressing the primitive Christians as the elect of God. It was a matter of certainty with them. Paul could say in 1 Thess. i. 4, '*Knowing*, brethren beloved, your election of God.' All, then, that is requisite for you to know whether you are one of the elect, is to follow the scripture rule as to who they are, and as to how you may become one of them. In the preceding paper we have pointed you to the most express statements of Scripture regarding this subject. 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14 states most distinctly that the means of election are the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth; and that it is by the gospel that God calls men to this faith and sanctification. Nor is this a solitary passage—the context of 1 Thess. i. 4, states

the same thing in different words. When the Apostle says to the Thessalonians that their election of God is known, he adds his reason for so saying—namely, that the gospel—as it always did—came not in word only, but in power, and in the holy Spirit; and that the Thessalonians, on their part, became followers of the apostles and of the Lord, *having received the word*.

Nothing, then, can be more evident than that it is by receiving the word—by believing the truth—by crediting the gospel—that men become the elect of God. The chosen are just those who believe—those who have placed their faith in the gospel. You need not, then, dear reader, remain a single hour in suspense. The gospel is sent you, and is accompanied by the divine Spirit, that you may possess 'the faith of God's elect.' It is your duty, then, 'to make your calling and election sure,' by immediate and perpetual faith in the glad tidings addressed to you by your gracious God. Beware, dear reader, of wearying out the grace of God—beware of disregarding his call till he call no more, and the hour of election is past. Dream not that God may have determined to choose and save you otherwise than by your acceptance of the gospel. Remember, that even those who are already chosen must keep by the gospel, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus—2 Tim. ii. 10. Remember, that though many are called, yet but few are chosen—the majority of men, as you are aware, rejecting the call. Be not deceived, dear reader. God will choose no man who rejects the Son of his love. Do not imagine, that because you have not as yet been chosen, that you cannot now be so. Rom. ix. 25, 26 disproves such an idea—'I will call them,' says Jehovah, 'my people, who were not my people, and her beloved, who was not beloved; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God.' Now, O sinner! God is waiting to call you his—receive by faith the elect Redeemer, and you shall become elect in him.

## MAY I NOT BE REPROBATE?

ONE of the most fearful thoughts that can agitate the human soul is that of being rejected—disapproved—cast off by God. Nothing more clearly evinces the callousness of the heart of man than the fact, that the bare possibility of the reprobation of God does not instantly create the most fervid anxiety regarding the salvation of the soul. We know of nothing more appalling than that thousands of sinners can live in continual unconcern, and yet know that at any moment they may be for ever cast away by God, and be eternally lost to all that is good and great, and glorious, and pure, and happy, and be shut up to the most direful of destinies. We do not wonder then, dear reader, that you are anxious to know that you are not reprobated by Jehovah, but may now, and for evermore, enjoy the smile of that great and glorious Being, whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life.

If the terrible thought, that it was God's eternal determination to reprobate you, or that now you are beyond the reach of mercy, is distracting your spirit, you will rejoice to learn that such doctrine is not the truth; but that now God is most desirous to accept and approve you, and has done all that can be done on his part to effect your introduction into the enjoyment of his love, smile, and fellowship.

Observe, then, if you please, that reprobation signifies *rejection after trial*. Whatever the reprobation refers to, it invariably signifies that the person or thing has undergone trial, and is found wanting. The word reprobate was used by metallists, to denote any metal that did not stand the test; and the following passages cannot fail to prove that this is the scripture idea of the word—Jer. vi. 30, Describing the wicked, says, 'Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.' Heb. vi. 7, 8, describing them who, after having received the Saviour, finally apostatise, says—'The earth which drinketh in the rain which cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth

herbs meat for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God ; but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh into cursing ; whose end is to be burned.' Paul, in Cor. ix. 24-27, describing the christian state on earth as a race, says, 'So run that ye may obtain.' 'I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.' We have then most distinctly before us God's principles of reprobation. It is not his manner to reject before trial. On the contrary, he gives the sinner far more than a sufficient opportunity. Indeed, so long-suffering is God, and so unwilling is he to condemn the sinner, that his forbearance is actually taken advantage of by men, and they daringly ask the impious question—'Where is the proof of his coming vengeance.' But what is God's reply : 2 Pet. iii. 9, 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, *not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*'

We have now simply to understand the specific ground on which God reprobates men? Why does he do it? For what particular reason? One grand reason only—their rejection of God's dear Son. God does not reprobate men because he wills it—because it pleases him—because they are sinners or great sinners ; but because of their wilful rejection of the one only Saviour, whom God in his unspeakable kindness has provided for them, and because rejecting him, there is no other way in heaven or earth by which they can be saved. If then, O sinner, you reject Jesus, if you do not take him as your Saviour, God has no course but to reprobate you. When he is infinitely satisfied with the Redeemer as the propitiation for your sins, and when he has accepted him as such, can you expect anything else than that he should reprobate you if you reject the Saviour? Believe it, dear reader, this is the Bible doctrine of reprobation, and you cannot but consent to its righteousness. If you have any doubt as to this being the Bible way of it, hear the testimony—Luke xx. 17, 18, 1 Pet. ii. 6, 'The stone which the builders rejected,

the same is become the head of the corner. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone, shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder.' But, 'He that believeth on him shall not be confounded.' O then, dear reader, as you value eternal happiness, and dread the wrath of God, see that ye refuse no longer him that speaketh. Now throw yourself upon that divine Saviour who was despised and rejected of men, who has borne your griefs and carried your sorrows, who was wounded for your transgressions, and bruised for your iniquities. So do, and forthwith you shall stand accepted in the Beloved.

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### GOD OPERATING ON MAN.

MANY religious enquirers experience the greatest possible perplexity in regard to the divine procedure in operating on man. The reason of their perplexity is obvious. They look upon God as operating by mere caprice—they forget that he conducts his moral as well as his physical empire on fixed principles—they make no attempt to discover what these principles are—they seek for no rule by which to interpret the divine proceeding—they overlook the Bible declarations of the character of God, as a Being infinite in wisdom, justice, love, and truth—they fail to distinguish between things that differ, they do not give passages of Scripture their proper reference, nor draw from them their true meaning—they never think of explaining obscure doctrinal allusions by the facts of the case to which they refer—they do not keep in view that God operates by agents and instrumentalities, nor do they think of enquiring how the agent employed has obeyed the divine will, or what may have been the nature of the means adopted—they do not remember that such is the idiom of human language, that things are ascribed to the chief operator, when they are actually the doings of inferior agents, and done by them against the wish of him under whose control they are. It is no wonder, then, that



serious difficulties are experienced on such topics as are alluded to in the following passages of Scripture. Give us your attention, dear reader, while we endeavour to show you, that those portions of Scripture, confessedly the most perplexing, fully accord with Scripture in general in shewing that God is infinitely wise, and just, and kind; and that the design of all his operations toward man is, that he may be saved.

Rom. ix. 19-23 is a vindication of God's sovereign prerogative in the work of creation, as well as in providence and grace. God had a right to create, and to give to the creature his position in the universe, while the creature has no right to say—'Why hast thou made me thus?' The potter has full power over the clay to make vessels both to honour and dishonour. But be it observed, that while God had this power, we are distinctly told, both in this passage, and in Jer. xviii. 1-10, from which Paul quotes, that it was not God's wish to make any vessel to dishonour. Jeremiah says that the vessel was 'marred in the hands of the potter'—not that the potter intended to mar it, but the very reverse; for he is speaking of the highly privileged house of Israel as the vessel, and its evil doing as the marring, and the cause of its being fitted for destruction. And Paul, alluding to God's unparalleled forbearance with the Jews, says, that though he might have been willing to shew his wrath and power, yet he 'endured them with much long-suffering.' There is no such doctrine here as that God has created any creature for dishonour or destruction. The manifest doctrine of the passage, as borne out both by the words of Jeremiah and the history of the people referred to, is, that God finding his purposes of mercy frustrated by the wickedness of those on whose behalf they were manifested, and that all his long-suffering was unavailing to their salvation, there was no course left but to visit them with merited vengeance. Such, dear reader, is God's mode of operating, both with nations and individuals.

In Rom. ix. 15, 16, 18, we have God's own declaration, that this is his principle of government. Ver. 15, 'He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I *can* (not *will*)

have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I *can* have compassion.' Verse 16 teaches that it is God's prerogative to show mercy, and that his doing so is not at the dictate of the will of man. And verse 18 shows that it is God's resolution to harden those on whom he cannot have mercy, that is, those who persist in the resistance of his mercy. A moment's reflection shows that it is impossible for God to have mercy on those who persist in defying both his law and his grace—that to do so would be to overturn his throne, and to throw the universe into anarchy—and that the hardening of the heart is the natural and inevitable result of the resistance of law and goodness. In Rom. ix. 17, we have a fearful example of these solemn truths in the case of Pharaoh. The facts stated by the apostle are, that God raised him up from sickness—not for the purpose of hardening his heart—but that God's power might be shown in him, and the divine name or character declared throughout all the earth. Here be it observed that God stood pledged to liberate the Israelites, and that either his engagement should be broken, or Pharaoh should be made to yield. Next be it noticed, that God adopted the very measures that were best calculated to melt the heart of the haughty monarch, giving him, after the most distinct requirements, one after another of the most awful demonstrations of his power and determination to have his people set free. Again be it recollected, that when it is said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, it is not meant that God had any desire to do so; but simply that this result was brought about by Pharaoh's resistance of God's measures, which, as every one must see, were well calculated to have had the very opposite effect, and, therefore, that Pharaoh was the only blameable cause of the hardening of his heart, as is plainly shown in the Mosaic narrative—as for example in Exod. ix. 34: 'And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, and the hail, and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and *hardened his heart.*' So is it in every instance in which any of God's creatures have their hearts hardened against him—so is it with every child whose heart is hardened

against its parents—the resistance of will, government, law, goodness, power, love, or anything, however much calculated to soften, invariably and necessarily leads to hardness of heart and impenitence. Take warning, then, dear reader, lest your heart be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

In Rom. xi. 7–11, and in 2 Thes. ii. 10–12, we have a statement of the dire results on the human understanding of the resistance of God's truth. God had done every thing that could have been done to give the Israelites the knowledge of his will, and to render them faithful unto him as their God. Yet though he had exalted them to heaven with privileges, they equalled in infidelity the most heathen nations on earth. So general was the defection from the living God, that in the days of Elias there were only seven thousand men of the whole nation who had not bowed the knee to Baal. The result of this was, that God chose or reserved to himself those seven thousand, and the rest were blinded. 'God gave them,' says the apostle, 'the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear.' And as this was the case with the unbelieving Jews, so is it with the unbelieving Gentiles: 'God shall send them,' says the apostle, 'strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.' Now here let it be understood why and how God does so. Is it because it is his pleasure? No; God does not wish any of his creatures to be blinded or deluded; but if they reject the truth by which alone they can be enlightened, there is nothing for them but blindness, darkness, delusion. God asked regarding the Jews—'What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?' When it is said that God blinds men, it is not meant that he has done anything with that intention, but that their refusal of his light and truth has left them in blindness. For what cause does the apostle say, God sends strong delusion? '*because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved.*' The thing is self-evident, that if men will not receive the truth they must believe a lie—they must remain under a delusion. God, then, is said to cause blindness or to send delusion in sending truth, which was intended for the very

opposite purpose, but which, by rejection, has this most fearful effect.

You have, then, before you, dear reader, a scripture view of God's mode of operating on man. God wishes to prepare you as a vessel unto glory; but if you persist in rejecting the offices of his grace, you will fit yourself only for destruction. God's will is to have mercy, and he is now doing all that can be done to induce your acceptance of it; but if you weary out his long-suffering, there is nothing for you but wrath. God has manifested such love to you in the gift of Jesus as is abundantly sufficient to soften, and melt, and win your hard, and cold, and faithless heart; but if the love thus revealed to you is resisted by you, your heart must grow harder and harder by your resistance. God has sent his Spirit and his servants with the gospel of him who was sent for a light to the Gentiles, to open your eyes, and to turn you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that you may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Jesus; but if by unbelief you allow the god of this world to blind your eyes, shall your delusion not be your own doing, and may God not appeal as of old, and say, what could have been done more that I have not done?

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## WHAT MUST I DO?

WE suppose, dear reader, that your question is that of the anxious jailor of Philippi—'What must I do to be saved?' We suppose that you see yourself a sinner against God, and therefore, that you stand in need of salvation, and consequently are in earnest in asking what you must do to get it. Attend, then, while we endeavour to lay before you what you must do.

First allow us to tell you **WHAT YOU MUST NOT DO.** *You must NOT WORK to be saved.* We say this in regard to every

description of work. We say this respecting work that is right, as well as work that is wrong. We say it in regard to gospel requirements as well as to deeds of law. And we say it, moreover, without knowing what your past career has been, or what your present character may be. You may be what the world esteems the worst of characters, or you may be the best. It matters not—you are not to work to be saved. But, again, *You must NOT WAIT to be saved.* This we say without knowing at all whether you have been waiting any as yet or not. We say it without any regard to your age—you may be young or old—you may have waited long already, or may not have waited at all—it all signifies nothing—you are not to wait to be saved. But further, *you must NOT PRAY to be saved.* We do not know whether you have ever prayed to God hitherto or not. And we know not whether your prayers—if you have prayed—have been mere words of form, or anxious breathings. Be that as it may, you are not to pray to be saved. And, moreover, *you must NOT SORROW to be saved.* We are ignorant whether your sins have caused you that grief which they ought. We cannot tell whether they ever caused the penitential tear to fall adown your cheek. But whether they have or have not, you must not sorrow to be saved.

Here we beg you not to misapprehend our meaning. Remember that although we say that you must not work, nor wait, nor pray, nor sorrow to be saved, we do not tell you that works are non-essential, or that there is nothing to wait for, or that prayer is useless, or that sorrow for sin may be dispensed with. We simply tell you that you must not do these things to be saved by the doing of them, and this we do most earnestly press upon your consideration. Our meaning is, that you must be saved before you work, and that you cannot work acceptably till you are saved. We do not say that the saved man is not to work—for the man who does not work is not saved. Our meaning is, that you must be saved before you pray, and that you cannot pray effectually till you are saved. We do not say that when you are saved you are not to pray; for whenever you are saved you will not can avoid pray-

ing. Our meaning is, that you must be saved before you wait, and that you have nothing to wait for till you are saved. We do not say that when you are saved you shall have nothing to wait for; for the saved have many great and precious promises to wait for. Our meaning is, that you must be saved ere you can truly sorrow for your sins. We do not say, that when you are saved your sins are to occasion you no sorrow; for whenever you are saved then will you from the depths of your heart regret your past offences.

What, then, MUST YOU DO TO BE SAVED? We answer, *you must ACCEPT SALVATION.* Yes, dear reader, this is what you have to do. God is now offering you salvation. He is holding it out to you as a free gift. He wishes no further qualifications in you than that you *need* it. This you do, and therefore he has procured it for you, holds it out to you, and presses it upon your acceptance. What said Paul to the Ephesians?—(ii. 8): ‘By grace are ye saved (through faith), and that’—salvation—‘not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.’ Now this same gift awaits your acceptance. You have more full particulars of it in 5th of Romans. Verse 15 tells you that this gift of the grace of God is bestowed through Jesus Christ. Verse 16 tells you that notwithstanding your many offences it is unto justification. Verse 17 tells you that those who receive it shall reign in life by him who wrought out the gift. And verse 18 tells you that it has come upon all men. Now, anxious sinner, what more want you than this? Why not at once, in the language of faith, exclaim with the apostle, ‘Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.’

But perhaps you have some difficulty as to how you are to accept this gift. For it is not more true that gifts require to be accepted, than it is that gifts differing in their nature one from another, and conveyed in different modes, require to be accepted in a way corresponding to their nature and the mode of their conveyance. Some gifts, we know, require merely a verbal acceptance, some an acceptance by letter, others to be taken by the hand. How, then, has God’s gift of salvation to be accepted? To know

this we have simply to inquire how he has conveyed it to us. The answer is, in a testimony. Well, then, it must be accepted by faith. Must it not? Yes, dear reader, this is the way. Thus answered the apostle the question of the anxious jailor,—‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.’ Do you, then, believe God when he tells you of his gift in Jesus? This is what you have to do to be saved. Doing this, then all things else shall follow in due order.

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### I NEVER DOUBTED.

It is not uncommon to find the sinner endeavouring to persuade himself that he is a believer in Jesus, either by saying, ‘I never doubted;’ or, ‘I always believed.’ In noticing this objection, we must give you to understand, dear reader, that you may believe a very great deal, and yet not be what the Word of God denotes by the term, Believer. The great majority of people in this country believe a large proportion of divine truth, and yet many of that majority neither are, nor profess to be, justified or saved. It is necessary, then, that we take you step by step along the line of gospel truth, and show you how much you may believe, and yet not be saved by your believing.

1<sup>st</sup>, You may believe that the Bible is the word of God, and yet be unsaved. The Jews had this faith in the Old Testament scriptures, but the mere belief of this did not save them. 2<sup>d</sup>, You may believe that every word the Bible says is true, and yet be unsaved. The Jews’ faith went this far, but it did not save them. 3<sup>d</sup>, You may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and yet be unsaved. Judas believed this, but his faith did not save him. 4<sup>th</sup>, You may believe that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again, and yet be unsaved. The inhabitants of Jerusalem and its environs believed this—they could not deny it, yet

their faith did not save them. *5th*, You may believe that the Lord Jesus is a saviour—a saviour for sinners of Adam's race—a saviour for all—a perfect saviour and the only saviour, and yet be unsaved. Thousands are to be found who believe all this, yet their belief does not save them. And, *6th*, You may believe most of the doctrines of scripture, such as, that man is a sinner, that the wages of sin is death, that justification is by faith, that Jesus shall come again, that the dead shall rise and the judgment shall follow, and yet not be saved. Multitudes confess to the belief of all this, and yet acknowledge themselves unsaved.

Now, be it here observed, that while we say that you may believe all that we have now advanced and still be unsaved, we do not give you to suppose that any of the truths alluded to are matters of indifference. On the contrary, we tell you that you cannot possibly be saved if you disbelieve that the Bible is the word of God—if you disbelieve its statements—if you disbelieve that Jesus is the Son of God—if you disbelieve that he died, was buried, and rose again—if you disbelieve that he is a Saviour—that he is man's only and all-sufficient Saviour—or if you disbelieve the category of doctrines given. We declare emphatically that you cannot be saved disbelieving these things; but we declare also that you may believe all this and yet remain unsaved. What then, you will ask, must you believe over and above all this?

You have it, dear reader, in Gal. ii. 20, '*I live,*' says the apostle, '*by the faith of the Son of God, who LOVED ME and gave himself FOR ME.*' This is what your faith must come to if you are to be saved by it. It is only when you believe that the Son of God *loved you* and gave himself *for you*, that you are a believer in the Bible sense of the word. Till you believe this you are overlooking God's gospel to you, and your faith, though it grasp everything else, must leave you unjustified, unsanctified, and unsaved. And in conclusion, remember, dear reader, that it is not believing, merely to take this glorious truth for granted, or merely not to doubt it. There may be no faith where there is no doubt. That is, the mere absence of doubt



does not imply the presence of faith, for the thing may not be in the mind at all, and then, truly, there is no doubting; but then, there is as truly no faith. Understand then, that it is only by keeping the truth present to the mind that there is really the belief of it; and that unless you can from the heart and with the knowledge of the scriptural import of the words, say, 'I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me,' you are not a believer nor a justified person.

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### WHAT DID THE SAVIOUR DO IN DYING?

THERE are some who, while they believe that the Saviour died for them, yet do not understand what he accomplished on their behalf by his decease. They apprehend the fact of his death, but not the import of the fact. They see this much perhaps, that it shewed wondrous love on the Saviour's part to give himself for them, but what necessary thing his life and death effected they do not comprehend. This being their state of mind, the blood of Jesus is not seen by them to be sin-cleansing and peace-speaking blood.

Here, then, dear reader, observe that it is right to view the work of Jesus as an exhibition of the love of God, but not as a mere exhibition of love. It is as much an exhibition of divine wisdom and justice as of compassion; and, indeed, the amazingness of the love can only be seen when the wisdom and justice are duly beheld occupying the places which they did in the great scheme of redemption. In order to see this, we have simply to institute the inquiry, What was it that required to be done? and in discovering this you have an answer to the question, What did the Saviour do in dying?

What, then, was it that had to be done for us? What did our case require? What was our position, and what did God wish to accomplish on our behalf? The answer

is simply, We had sinned, and by our sin had incurred the penalty of death; but God wished to save us. How then was this to be done? became the question. It would not have done for God to have simply passed over our transgressions. For then the righteous and holy character of his government would have been lost, we, the sinners, would have been left in our sins, and the circle would gradually have widened until the whole universe had become one terrific scene of rebellion. One of two courses, then, was alone open—either to inflict on us the penalty attached to our sins, or to procure some one to take our place, suffer in our stead, and render satisfaction to the divine government for our transgression of the law. But where was such a one to be found? No man could do it, for every man was a transgressor. In fact, no mere creature could do it, for every creature was under law as well as man, and had to fulfil it for himself independently altogether of others; to say nothing of the inadequacy of a mere creature as an offering for the world, could one have been found willing and in a position to have become an offering. Nor could any personage wearing the divine nature only do it either, for a divine being was necessarily above law, and those who are above or beyond law, as every one knows, law cannot touch. It was impossible, then, that any mere creature could become the saviour of mankind; and as impossible that a being solely divine could do so. Here, then, was a problem which nothing but the wisdom of God could solve. How, then, was it solved? In this way—The divine personage Jesus, who for himself was under no law, and free from all requirement as the subject of any law, volunteered to place himself under the broken law by taking upon him the nature of those who had broken it, that he might first be in a position to fulfil its obligations as an example to the transgressors of it, and having done so, that he might secondly be in a position to submit to its penalty as a suffering substitute for them. Here, then, was a Saviour in every respect qualified for the great and glorious work which our world's necessities required. Now this is precisely what the Saviour had to accomplish, and did accomplish.

The law had no claim on the divine Jesus; so far as he was himself concerned the law could neither exact nor put forth any requirement of obedience. When, therefore, he put himself under the law, it was for mankind that he did it, when he obeyed all its requirements it was on man's account that he did so, and when, having fulfilled all its precepts, he surrendered himself to its sin-avenging stroke, he did so in the sinner's room and stead. It was imperiously necessary, therefore, that the Saviour provided by Jehovah in his love for guilty man, should have been just such a personage as Jesus, and should have done just what he did. Any other than Immanuel—God with us—God manifest in the flesh, could not have been the saviour of guilty man—could not have effected the saving work—could not have rendered an effectual sacrifice—could not have regained our lost allegiance and affections to God. Here, then, appears an exquisite propriety in all that the sacred scriptures say of Jesus, both as regards his person and his work—alike as to who he is and what he has done. Observe, dear reader, the doctrine of the following passages: Gal. iv. 4, 5, 'God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.' Isa. xlii. 21, 'The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law and make it honourable.' Gal. iii. 13, 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' Heb. ii. 9, 'We see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.' 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6, 'There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.' 1 John ii. 1, 2, 'If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' Isa. liii. 5, 6, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we

have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.'

We cannot suppose, dear reader, that you can thoughtfully consider these glorious passages of the divine record without seeing what the Saviour has done for you—without seeing that it was absolutely essential to your forgiveness and salvation that some one take your place, render a perfect obedience to the law which you have dishonoured, and submit to the penalty which it proclaimed as the due reward of your sins—without seeing that the divine Jesus was the only one who could do this, and that *he has done it*, and therefore that *the saving work is done*. Yes, dear reader, whatever was necessary to be done in order to the remission of all your sins and your acceptance by God as if you had never sinned, Jesus has done; and in regard to that, he said, 'It is finished.' In conclusion, then, we say that there is nothing which you, as a sinner, can need that you have not in Jesus. Say what there is that your case requires that you have not in the divine Redeemer? Is there anything? You are under the law, but did he not put himself under it for you? You dishonoured it, but has he not honoured it on your behalf? Death was the wages of your sins, but did he not die in your stead? Your sins barred you from the fellowship of God, but has he not borne them away? The divine law was unfavourable to your forgiveness, but has he not become a satisfaction for you? You must have been sacrificed, but has he not become your sacrifice? You are without righteousness, but is his righteousness not open to you for the accepting of it? There is, therefore, nothing that you as a sinner need that you have not in Jesus. O, then, sinner, believe these glad tidings of great joy, and enter into that free and full salvation which they reveal unto you as the gift of God in Jesus.

## WHAT IS FAITH?

WE suppose you, dear reader, to be one who knows that salvation is by faith—by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but that you yet require to know what this faith is that puts you in possession of that salvation which is in Christ Jesus. Observe then that the same things may be variously stated, defined, or illustrated, just as the same building or landscape may be seen from different points of view.

We therefore give you the various scripture definitions and illustrations of faith, which are as follow:—

1st, FAITH IS BELIEVING. All who know anything of Bible phraseology are aware that the words *faith* and *belief* are interchangeable terms—that what is said of the one is likewise said of the other—that exactly as salvation is declared to be ‘through faith,’ it is, in like manner, said to be by believing. For example: John iii. 16, ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, *that whosoever believeth in him* should not perish, but have everlasting life;’ Acts xvi. 31, ‘*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’ Now, as you may have considerable difficulty as to what faith is, but may see quite clearly what it is to believe, it cannot but be a cause of encouragement and joy to find in the words of the Bible itself that faith is simply believing, as is evident in the fact that the words are used interchangeably, or that the same salvation is said to flow equally through belief as through faith.

2nd, FAITH IS TAKING GOD AT HIS WORD. All know what it is to take a person at his word. When an individual, to whom another makes a statement, says, ‘I take you at your word,’ we see an example of faith or belief—we see a testimony given, and that testimony credited—and this is faith. There are various portions of Scripture which bear evident reference to this aspect of the subject. For example: John iii. 33, ‘He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true;’ 1 John v. 10, ‘He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because

he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.' Thus, not only do we find that faith is believing on the Lord Jesus, but that believing on him consists in crediting what God says about him ; or, in the words of these last quotations, in receiving God's testimony or record which he has given concerning his Son.

**3rd, FAITH IS RECEIVING, TAKING, OR LAYING HOLD OF JESUS.** When we take a person at his word, or receive his testimony, we of course thereby accept that of which he testifies, if that of which he speaks be either offered or given. Now, as we have seen that God in his testimony tells us that he has given us his beloved Son—given us him as our Saviour, as the sufferer for our sins, the medium of our justification, and the restorer of eternal life and all its blessings,—it follows, that in taking God at his word, in receiving his testimony, we receive his Son as set before us in his testimony. So that faith, in its next aspect, is seen to be the receiving of, the taking or laying hold of Jesus. Hence John i. 12, 'As many as *received him*, to them gave he power (right or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them *that believe on his name*.'

**4th, FAITH IS LOOKING TO JESUS.** Faith is to the mind what looking is to the eye. By looking at any outward object, that object is brought into contact with the sense of sight, and it thereby produces an effect on the person looking at it, corresponding to the nature of the thing looked at. So, by faith or belief in any person or testimony, that person or testimony is brought into contact with the mind of the person believing therein, and effects follow corresponding with the nature of the thing or person believed upon. This is perhaps one of the most simple and expressive of any of the Scripture illustrations of faith. No act is more simple or easily understood than that of looking at an object. And such is faith. Hence John i. 29, '*Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world*;' and Heb. xii. 2, '*Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*.' Under this view, the mind of the sinner is to be brought into contact with the Saviour and his saving work, just as the eye gazes upon outward objects. Faith is, for the mind to be directed to Jesus, to

keep before it the unspeakably precious truth that the Redeemer has borne away our sins, and thus opened a new and living way of access to God for us.

5th, FAITH IS COMING TO CHRIST. The next idea to that of looking to an attractive object is that of coming to it. The sight of it draws us towards it. So, when the Saviour is beheld by the eye of faith, the believing sinner is drawn to him. There is everything to attract, and nothing to repel. As the eye of the sinner catches the compassionate Redeemer's gaze of pity, his inviting glance seems to repeat the kind welcome which his lips so fervently breathed, '*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*' Hence John vi. 35, '*Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*'

6th, FAITH IS TRUSTING IN, CONFIDING IN, DEPENDING ON, OR RELYING ON, THE SAVIOUR. Whenever the sinner's mind rests believingly on the Redeemer, then his faith assumes the aspect of trust, confidence, reliance, or assurance. By steadily fixing his thoughts on the Saviour as he is presented to view in the gospel testimony, unbelief and doubt disappear from the mind as darkness from our globe on the rising of the sun. And then the sin-burdened spirit sinks as sweetly and consciously into the safe keeping of that Saviour who can save to the uttermost, as does the babe into the gentle embrace of its ever watchful mother. Hence Matt. xii. 21, '*In his name shall the Gentiles trust*'; Eph. i. 12, 13, '*That we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ: in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation*'; Heb. iii. 14, '*For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end*'; x. 35, '*Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.*'

7th, FAITH IS BUILDING ON CHRIST, AS AN EDIFICE IS REARED ON A FOUNDATION. A foundation is that on which anything rests, or is built. This Jesus is to the sinner. And by faith the sinner builds on this foundation for eternity. Faith regards the Saviour precisely in this light.

She looks around, and sees nothing that can sustain the weight of the human soul, burdened with a load of guilt, till Jesus, the one foundation, is discovered. On that foundation she plants herself, and, ceasing not to build thereon till her province is gone through, the sinner is exalted, a monument of divine compassion, to the heights of salvation and blessedness. So, Isa. xxviii. 16, 'Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, *a sure foundation*: he that believeth shall not make haste.'

**8th, FAITH IS FEEDING ON JESUS.** Jesus is to the soul of man what food is to the body. The body dies without food, and without Christ the soul is dead. And just what partaking of food is, believing in the Saviour is. It is by eating and drinking food that our bodies are brought into contact with it, and thereby sustained. And it is by faith in the Redeemer that the saving virtue and life which are in him flow into our spiritual being, and render us safe and alive. So, in John vi. 51, Jesus said, 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man *eat of this bread*, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' By faith in Jesus we are made partakers of him, precisely as by eating and drinking we partake of our daily food. And just as we must daily eat our bread to live by it, so must we constantly feed by faith on the life-giving bread from heaven in order to live by it.

Dear reader, how stand you in relation to this all-important subject? Have you faith in the Lord Jesus? Is your faith such as to give you to know that your sins are forgiven? Has it given you peace with God? Do you believe in Jesus with all your heart? Do you believe in him as your Saviour—as having shed his blood for you—as having done enough for you? Have you taken God at his word when he tells you this? Have you received his testimony, and set to your seal that he is true? Have you ceased treating him as a liar? Have you taken the Saviour as he is set before you in the Gospel? Have you received him into your heart by faith? Have you laid hold on him as the mighty to save? Are you looking to



him as the Lamb of God, who has borne away your sins? Has your faith brought you to him as the only Saviour to whom you can go? Are you relying on his sacrifice? Are you trusting fully to it? Are you confident of its saving efficacy? Are you assured of your safety in trusting to it? Are you building your hopes for the world to come on Jesus as a tried and sure foundation? Do you feel him to be so? Is your soul feeding on him as the bread of life? Is it filled and satisfied with him as such? Remember, if you cannot say, Yes, to these interrogatives, your faith is wanting.

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### WHY IS FAITH REQUIRED?

If God really loves us, and is as anxious to save us as we are told, is it at all probable that he will condemn us for nothing more than unbelief? Is it consistent with the idea of infinite mercy to condemn men for such a trifling thing as this? So argues the sinner at Satan's suggestion.

But what is the use of faith? Why is it imperatively required? Just, dear reader, for this reason, that you cannot be saved without it. Although the Bible had said not a word about faith, it would still, from the very nature of things, have been quite as necessary as the Bible makes it to be. Faith is not a work of supererogation; it is not a thing that can be dispensed with; it must be had if the sinner is to be saved at all. It is not God's way to make unnecessary requirements, much less to make them and constitute them indispensable. Nor has he done so in requiring faith in the gospel of his grace.

That you cannot, dear reader, be saved without faith, appears in whatever aspect you look at salvation. Look at it as deliverance from your unconverted state—your present state of alienation from God to a state of union and enjoyment with him. How are you to be brought out of the one into the other but by faith? how are you to be

made to confide in God without faith! how can you be saved from your present state of practical atheism but by faith? Again, look at salvation as deliverance from your present state of enmity to God to one of love. How are you to be brought to love God but by believing in the love which he bears to you? and how can you believe this but by faith in that gospel in which the love of God is revealed to you? Again, look at salvation as deliverance from the condemning verdict of your conscience. How are you to be freed from the condemnation which presses upon your spirit in view of your sins, unless you believe that the Lamb of God has borne them away? Again, look at salvation as deliverance from the dominion of sin over you in your life and practice. How are you to be panoplied against its power, if your mind is not garrisoned by faith in the sufferings which Jesus had to endure as the sin-bearer, and exponent of God's detestation of all iniquity? Again, look at salvation as deliverance from the wages of sin, the condemnation of God, and the endurance of his wrath. How are you to be delivered from divine judgment, if you repudiate by unbelief him by whom alone your sins can be forgiven? And again, look at salvation in its fulfilment, in ultimate deliverance from all the evils of sin, in admission into the sacred family and presence of Jehovah. How can you be admitted there, treating God as a liar, rejecting his Son, resisting his Spirit? How can you be allowed there, unconverted, alienated from God, hating him and hating his, and pursuing sin in every form—all which would be without faith. Look, dear reader, at salvation in these its various aspects, and say how you can be saved without faith. Till you can tell how it is possible for all these deliverances to be effected without faith, you must see that faith cannot be dispensed with—that you cannot possibly be saved without it—and that it must be required of you.

O, then, reader, remember that without faith it is impossible to please God. Remember that your salvation hinges upon your faith. And O, if you wish to have the testimony that you please God—if you desire the knowledge of the forgiveness of your manifold sins—and if you

wish to meet death, and God, and judgment, in peace, and confidence, and joy, now believe the testimony of God regarding the manifestation of his love toward you, in the gift of his beloved Son.

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### FAITH THE GIFT OF GOD.

THE thought that faith is the gift of God is allowed by a considerable number to operate very mischievously upon their minds. They argue, that if faith be God's gift, they must just wait till it is given them. They forget that a gift necessarily requires acceptance. Forgetting this, they conclude that they have not faith—not because of any remissness in themselves in not inquiring how God bestows this gift, and in not accepting it in accordance with God's way of giving it—but simply because God has not yet been pleased to give it them. Their want of it they thus charge upon God, while they quite absolve themselves both from blame and responsibility. It is your duty, dear reader, to observe that while the sacred volume ascribes faith, like every christian grace, to God, yet it nowhere gives the slightest support to the idea of an arbitrary or a capricious enforcement of the gift, without either rule or means. The Bible, on this, as on all other questions, shows that God bestows his favour on well-founded and clearly expressed principles. So that no one can charge him with respect of persons—no one can say that he acts covertly—no one can show himself to be debarred from any of God's gifts, and no one can suppose himself irresponsible in obtaining any blessing that may be required.

We wish you, then, dear reader, not to dispute the fact that faith is a divine bestowment; for what good thing has any man that he has not received? But we do wish you to inquire *how* God bestows faith. It would be infidel to deny that bread is the gift of God; but it is by no means wrong to inquire how God gives it. Nay, it is positively

right and necessary to do so in order that we may, by using the means which God has ordained, become possessors of this gift of his providence. So it is not only legitimate, but necessary that we understand how God confers faith.

We beg you to observe, then, that it is the offspring of his love to man. But for his infinite love toward us we could have had no faith. Our obtaining it would have been an utter impossibility. The Saviour would not have come and died for us as he has done—the holy Spirit would not have come and taken of the things of Christ and shown them to us—there would have been no saving truth for us to believe—there would have been no opportunity afforded us for the exercise of faith. But we have to observe, that not only is God the author of our faith in all these particulars, but he is equally so in being the Father of our spirits; in giving us at first, and continuing to us till the present, all the faculties necessary to the development of faith. We, therefore, do not know a single particular in which the divine authorship of faith does not appear. The love in which we are to believe is God's; the Saviour is his giving; the holy Spirit is his giving; the testimony is his giving; the opportunity is his giving; and the mind with all its powers, and all the aids it needs, are his giving. And what it is that is essential to faith that has not God for its author, we do not know.

Still the question, how does God give faith, requires a special answer. Phil. i. 29: 'Unto you it, i.e. (an opportunity) is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake,' shows that faith is given by afforded opportunity to believe. And 1 Cor. iii. 5, 'Who, then, is Paul, and who Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man,' shows that this opportunity is given by the preaching of the gospel; and Rom. x. 14, 'How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?' confirms the showing of these other two passages. 'So, then,' concludes the apostle in Rom. x. 17, '*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*' This, dear reader, is God's way of giving faith, and

never shall you have it till you have it in this way. Say, what was the holy Spirit sent for but to testify to the world of Jesus? and what was the word written for, and what is the gospel preached for, but that you might hear that testimony? and what are your ears given you for but that in hearing you might believe? Thus, after all, the question revolves upon you—'Believest thou on the Son of God?' If not, why do you not? what hinders you? what wait you for? God does not wish you to continue treating him as a liar, and the gospel of his grace as a fable. At once, then, believe his faithful saying—that saying which is worthy of all acceptation, that though you are the chief of sinners, yet Jesus died for you.

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### IS MAN NOT UNABLE TO BELIEVE OF HIMSELF?

You may have been stumbled, dear reader, by the idea that man cannot believe of himself. We beg you, therefore, to understand that this idea may be either true or false according to the meaning that is attached to the phrase. In one sense it is true, in another it is quite deceptive. In God 'we live, and move, and have our being,' and strictly speaking man can do nothing of himself—that is, he can do nothing but of the abilities given him by God. He has no faculties or powers which he has not received—the giving of them to man, and the continuance of them in man's possession, are alike of God. It, therefore, follows that whatever proper employment man makes of them he makes by divine aid, and if he abuses his powers he abuses the gifts of God. And further, that so long as God in his goodness is pleased to continue to man the possession of the faculties bestowed upon him, he can use them. So if by this is meant believing of himself, then man is able of himself to believe. But, as any one may see, the phrase is altogether objectionable and defective; for after all the man does not believe of himself, but by virtue of the abilities conferred upon him by God.

Still, while to affirm unhesitatingly, that man can believe of himself, teaches to some extent the false doctrine that he is independent of Jehovah, it does not follow that an unqualified denial of the phrase is without danger. For then, another equally extreme idea is adopted—namely, that since man cannot believe of himself, he must wait till God is pleased to enable him to believe; and so the poor sinner procrastinates indefinitely, and, as in many thousands of cases, sinks at last into the grave of the impenitent. If, dear reader, you are at all acquainted with the word of God, you must know that while every faculty, gift, or grace which man possesses, is ascribed to God as the bestower thereof; yet the Bible nowhere teaches men to wait till God is pleased to supply gifts, the immediate exercise of which is enjoined, but to employ what he has already given, and to regard them as not their own but of God's bestowment. When, therefore, men are commanded to exercise any faculty, it by no means follows that the faculty in question is self-derived in man; but, on the contrary, that God has already bestowed it. Mark, dear reader, this position—When God commands men to exercise any faculty, it proves that they can do it, not that the power is their own, but that God has already given them the power, and therefore that they do not require to wait for it.

The fact, therefore, that God commands men to believe, is demonstration that he has already given them the power to do so. The Saviour lays down this very principle in his parable of the talents, as recorded in Matt. xxv. 14–30. He repudiates the insinuation that God reaps where he has not sown, or gathers where he has not strawn. Since, then, God commands all who hear the gospel to believe, it proves most clearly that he has given them all the powers and aids necessary to do so. For, on the Saviour's own showing, he would not seek to reap faith if he had not sown the seeds of it; and, therefore, since he does seek faith in all to whom his glad tidings of mercy have been addressed, he has strewn the elements which produce it.

You see, then, dear reader, that though you do not

believe of yourself, but of the ability which God has given you, yet since God has supplied you with every necessary aid, you cannot be in the slightest degree justifiable or safe in continuing in unbelief, as if God had left you unable to believe his record. Mark the argument in i. John v. 9: 'If we receive the witness of men the witness of God is greater.' What does this mean, but that since we are able to believe man—since we do believe him—since we think it worth our while to believe him—him who may be deceived himself, and who may deceive us, and whose testimony is oftentimes so unimportant and ill-sustained; we are surely able to believe God—we surely may believe him—we are surely interested in believing him—him who cannot be deceived himself, and who cannot deceive us, and whose testimony is so superior to man's both in importance and evidence. Do you know any conceivable reason, dear reader, why you should not believe God; or why you should conclude that you cannot believe him, and that even now? Why do you suppose that with the powers you now hold from God you cannot believe the record that he has given of his Son?

Perhaps you have some difficulty from the idea that the scriptures declare that some men cannot believe, and that you may be among the number. The only passages which we suppose you can refer to, are John v. 44, and John xii. 39. Observe, then, that when the Saviour said—'How can ye believe who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only,' he simply intimated, that when the opinion of man is preferred to the approval of God, we of course incapacitate ourselves for the reception of that truth which regards the honour of God as the highest of all considerations. If, then, dear reader, you aim to get the praise of your fallen fellow-creatures, and seek not God's approval, you are certainly not in a way to believe the gospel. But there is no reason why you should not disregard man's opinion of you, and forthwith make God's honour your object, and with this mind the impediment to the reception of the truth is gone. Observe again, that when John said of the Jews, that 'they could not believe because that Isaiah had said that

God had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts,' he did not teach that it was by God having decreed them either to unbelief or blindness; but simply that their resistance of the divine teaching had so affected them, that ere this time their heart had become so obdurate and their eyes so blind to the truth, that the most powerful evidence could not bring them to believe. It was a result of their resistance of the truth. And, dear reader, take warning; for if you persist in rejecting the gospel as these Jews did, you shall one day be as unable to believe as they became. While you are able to know the truth, however, you are able to believe it.

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### TRYING TO BELIEVE.

SOME inquirers there are who suppose it *difficult to believe*, and therefore set about *trying* to do it. If, dear reader, you have been doing so, you are doubly mistaken. You are mistaken, first, in supposing that it is difficult to believe; and, second, in trying to do it. It is not difficult to believe, the difficulty is all in the trying. Believing requires no trying, no effort, no exertion. The difficulty begins only with the trying to do what does not require any trying, and continues only so long as the unnecessary effort is prolonged. The reason why believing becomes difficult by trying to believe is, that in trying to believe the mind is directed to the process of trying instead of being fixed on the truth to be believed. If there is to be faith, there must be something to be believed. If there is nothing to believe, there cannot possibly be any believing, any more than if there is nothing to see there can be no seeing. But if anything comes between the mind and the truth to be believed; or, in other words, if anything, instead of the truth, occupies the mind, believing is as effectually prevented as if there were nothing to believe; just as when anything comes between the eye and an



object, the seeing of the object is prevented till the removal of the thing which hides it. Now, when the mind is occupied with trying to believe, that trying becomes an obstacle between it and the truth requiring to be believed, and on which alone the mind should rest. Believing, thus becomes difficult, if not impossible, till the trying be given up, and the mind allowed to bear directly on the truth. The conduct of those who thus try to believe is like that of a person with a telescope anxious to get a view of some far distant vessels; but who, instead of looking *right through* the telescope in the direction of the ships, keeps looking at the instrument, his mind wholly occupied with its construction, and trying by looking at it to see the ships. Now, when would he see them by trying in this manner? Never. So is it exactly with many inquirers and the gospel. They know that the truth is to be viewed through faith. But they keep looking at faith, not through it, and of course it becomes the object of the mind's efforts, while the glad tidings to which the mind should be at once directed are left out of sight altogether; and thus, by supposing faith to be difficult, and consequently trying to believe, the gospel is not believed at all.

Do not, then, dear reader, for a moment allow your mind to be harrassed with the thought that it is difficult to believe the gospel, or that you must try to believe it. We trust you see your difficulty has arisen from trying when no trying was necessary. In confirmation of this, observe that the scriptures enjoin you not to try to believe, but simply to believe. Acts xvi. 31, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' There is not a word about trying to believe in all the New Testament, and not a word about it being difficult to do so. Simply and universally there is the command, Believe. Had it been difficult, or had trying been necessary, both would certainly have been intimated. But everywhere we have the very reverse of any such intimation. We have, in the passage just quoted, an ignorant Gentile the one moment asking, What must I do to be saved? the next, told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; and forthwith we find him rejoicing in the truth. Now, dear reader, why should

it not be so with you? Why seek another course, when that taken by the Philippian jailor was so simple and so successful? Do not hesitate one moment longer. What hinders you this instant crediting God's testimony? Look at it for a moment. Here is that God that cannot lie, telling you that, sinner as you are, he loved you and gave his Son to die a sacrifice for your sins, and that now he is prepared to receive you into his favour through him. Now, why not this moment believe God? Is it not much more difficult to disbelieve than it is to believe him? If you were told not to believe God, what would you say!—would you not say, I shall believe—I must believe—I do believe—I cannot but believe my God. Well, dear reader, be it so.

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### TRYING TO FEEL FAITH.

THERE is no doubt, dear reader, that where there is faith it is known, felt, and experienced. So distinctly is this the case, that we do not require to try to feel faith, for wherever faith is, it is felt without any effort at feeling it; and if faith be wanting, it can never be got by trying to feel it. If it is in us it makes itself felt without any effort on our part; and if it be not in us, any mere effort to feel it can never make it felt. If we feel it, we would have done so without any trying to do so. And if we suppose that we have got it by any effort at trying to feel it, we are probably mistaking something else for it. Few things, we believe, more frequently occur to the inquirer than to try to feel faith. He sees the absolute necessity of faith in order to the enjoyment of the blessings of the gospel; and he therefore very naturally looks within to see whether or not he has faith, and often in looking within himself he is anxious to persuade himself that he has the thing sought for; and if he does not at once feel it to be in his possession, he tries to feel it. Now, it is just this

last step that is wrong. It is right to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith. Few things are more profitable than a narrow, honest, self-examination; but when the thing sought after is found to be wanting, how is it to be got, is the question? Only by that through which it is produced. Now faith is produced by testimony, and the way to know if we have faith, is to compare the testimony with our mind, and by asking ourselves the question, Do we believe this? our conscience at once replies according as the case may be. The inquirer after salvation wishes to know if he has faith—the faith which saves; how, then, is he to do? Simply to take the saving truth and ask himself, Do I believe this? am I trusting to it? am I confiding in it? am I resting upon it? am I satisfied with it? or, am I looking for something else—perhaps having so much faith in this, but still not throwing myself entirely upon it—still looking for something besides? This, conscience will at once tell, and that most certainly. When a proposition is presented to the mind, and the question is put, is this believed? the answer is given as clear as when a thing is presented to the eye, and the question is asked, do you see that? In both cases we can at once answer, yes! or no! If we do not see the thing that we desire to see, we bring it nearer to the eye, or make the eye rest more closely on it, and thus are we brought to see it. We never think of trying to feel sight; but we keep the eye fixed on the object which we desire to see, and when we see it we know that we do so. Precisely so is it with faith and the gospel. If we want to know whether we have faith, bring the mind and the gospel in contact, and then it is that if we have not previously had faith, it is got, and it is known to us that we have it.

Do you, then, dear reader, believe the gospel testimony? Do you believe that the Father sent the Son to be your Saviour? Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins according to the Scriptures? Do you believe that he, the just, suffered for you, the unjust, that he might bring you to God? Are you trusting, confiding, resting on these glorious facts?

## PRAYING FOR FAITH TO BELIEVE.

Do you understand, dear reader, what you mean, when you say that you are praying for faith to believe? Does the word of God tell you to do what you say you are about? No, it does not. It tells you first of all to believe. It tells you that without faith it is impossible to please God. It tells you to pray certainly, but it says, pray *in* faith—not *for* faith, but *in* faith. Jas. i. 6, 7, says, 'Let him ask *in* faith, *nothing wavering*; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.' Again, Rom. x. 13, says, 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,' but verse 14 adds—'How then shall they call on him in whom *they have not believed*?' Thus you must believe ere you pray. When you pray, you must do so in faith. Unless you ask *in* faith, you shall receive nothing for your asking. But not only so. For when you do pray, you must do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. This proves not only that faith is an indispensable prerequisite and adjunct to prayer, but that the faith thus required is faith in the Lord Jesus. It is on the name of the Lord that you are to call, and your faith is to be in him in whose name you plead.

You know, dear reader, that in prayer you approach God. Prayer is your coming to God. This being so, you see in these passages quoted, not only the general principle that faith is essential to acceptable prayer—not only the fact, that he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him; but likewise the special application of that general principle in reference to the sinner and the Saviour. That is, in coming to God, you come by prayer, believing prayer, but you must come through Jesus; for says he, 'I am the way and the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me.' So reads John xiv. 6; and says Heb. vii. 25, 'He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.' It is self-evident, then, that we

cannot approach acceptably to God but through the One Mediator, Christ Jesus, and that as faith is a necessary element in our coming to Jehovah, we must have faith in him by whom we come to God. This must be so, for it is only by faith in Jesus that we can come to God through him as our Mediator. With these principles before you, dear reader, you cannot fail to see the import of the apostolic form of prayer and invocation—‘for Christ’s sake.’ Jesus’ sake is the one great argument which God in his love has given the unworthy sinner to plead. This argument alone is of any weight with God; and O, sinner, rejoice that with him it is all powerful and prevailing. He cannot deny it. To do so, would be to deny his own dear Son, in whom he declares himself well pleased. With this plea, dear reader, you can with holy boldness, at all times, approach the throne of Jehovah, and that in the certain confidence of finding acceptance. Go then, sinner, to God, with this plea, for every thing you need. But dare not to use it as a mere form, in which you have no faith yourself. Plead not a name in which you do not believe. But why should you not believe in the name of him who loved you unto death, and why should you fear to plead that name which Jehovah delights to acknowledge?

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### SAVING FAITH.

It is not improbable, dear friend, that you have been considerably perplexed with the distinction of *common* from *saving* faith; or that you have given yourself great anxiety about getting the latter; or again, that you have been anxious to know whether the faith that you may have is really saving. You have very likely got it into your mind that saving faith is not the belief of the saving truth; but a particular mode of believing, or the manag-  
ing to rise to a certain pitch of mental effort of rare and

difficult attainment. If any such fancy as this has obtained possession of your mind, we entreat you to observe that saving faith is no particular mode of believing; that it does not require any extraordinary mental energy, or any attempt at flights of mind, but that it is simply a steady, unwavering heart-felt reliance upon that truth which has in it the power to save. It matters not how correct a person's notions may be, or how philosophical his mode of applying his thoughts to truth, if he believes not the saving truth, his faith does not and cannot save him. And again, it signifies nothing how crude an individual's notions are of the operations of the mind in the act or state of believing, if that person's mind is fixed believably on the soul-saving truth, he is saved thereby. The great question, then, with the sinner in search of saving faith—is not, *how* am I to believe? but, *what* am I to believe?

We have answers to this question in many parts of scripture. We have a very express answer in Rom. i. 16, 'I am not ashamed of *the Gospel of Christ*, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Here it is most unequivocally stated that it is the gospel of Christ that must be believed. What then is the gospel? becomes the question. Here there must be no mistake. Error here cannot but be fatal. Do you then, dear reader, understand what the gospel is? Now we must here tell you, that the gospel is not what many imagine it to be. It is not the Bible—it is not religion—it is not the church—it is not faith—it is not justification—it is not baptism—it is not prayer—it is not the supper—it is not your good works—it is not God—it is not the holy Spirit—but *it is the good news concerning Jesus*. Now what good news is it? We are told in 1 Cor. xv. 1-4: 'Moreover, brethren,' says the apostle, 'I declare unto you *the gospel* which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand, *by which also ye are saved*, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain; for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that *Christ died* FOR OUR SINS according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scrip-

tures.' Here, then, is the gospel as Paul received it, believed it, confessed it, and preached it. Here is the gospel for which he suffered the loss of all things; under the belief of which he was borne triumphantly over greater trials and difficulties than ever man underwent before; and at last was able to say, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.'

Now, dear reader, we beg of you to observe that what this gospel was to Paul and did for him, it is to you and can do for you. It was God's good news to him, and he received it as such. It told him that Christ died for his sins according to the scriptures; he believed it, and was saved by it; and according to Paul himself it is the same good news to you—it is God's power to save you—it shews that the same Jesus died for your sins as for Paul's, and by your receiving it you shall be saved by it as truly as was Paul. Do you, then, believe this? Do you believe it all, not a part of it, but all—not only that the Messiah died, not merely that he died for sin, but that he died for your sins according to the scriptures? Ah, reader, whether you believe it or not this is God's truth; and remember, that if ever you have saving faith it must be by believing this—the one—the glorious gospel. You may believe anything or everything besides this; but unless you come up to this point, all shall avail you nothing. There is no saving faith but in believing this gospel. Do not, then, O sinner, rest till you rest in the faith, that the Son of God loved you and gave himself for you.

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### DEAD FAITH.

PERHAPS, dear reader, you ask, may not your faith be dead faith? Your question is very easily answered; you need not for a moment be in doubt regarding it. 'The

word of God tells you distinctly what sort of faith dead faith is. James ii. 17, 20, 26, says—'Faith, if it hath not works, is dead *being alone*'—'Wilt thou know, O vain man, that *faith without works is dead*'—'As the body without the spirit is dead, *so faith without works is dead also*.' We all know that that which is dead is inactive, inoperative, unproductive, fruitless. If, then, dear reader, your faith is of this character, there can be no doubt that it is dead, and, as this apostle teaches, can neither justify nor save you. It is, therefore, of vast importance for you to look carefully to the fruits of your faith; for if it is not producing fruit, it is certainly dead, and can no more avail to your justification, sanctification, or salvation, than if you were utterly infidel in sentiment.

The apostle Paul characterises living or justifying faith in one little sentence in Gal. v. 6, 'Faith which worketh by love.' That faith which works by love, and it alone, is living, active, energetic, justifying, sanctifying, saving faith. Your first inquiry, then, dear reader, should be, Has your faith filled your heart with love? has love, in consequence of your faith, taken full possession of your soul, and become a ruling principle within you? has the love of God been shed abroad in your heart by your belief in it, as it shines in flood-streams upon you in the face of Jesus Christ? Can you, therefore, say with the apostle, 'The love of Christ constraineth me?' If, dear reader, the love of God is not dwelling in your heart by faith, and does not by the power of its influence excite you to the reciprocation of it and the manifestation of the like love to your fellow-men, your faith must be dead; and farther, you need go with your inquiry, as to whether it is so or not.

You may have works to show, and them in abundance; but if they are not works of faith and labours of love, they are no evidence whatever that you have living and justifying faith. Works, whatever be their character in themselves, which do not spring from a heart filled by faith with the love of God as it is manifested in the gospel, are good for nothing in determining the question of a sinner's state in the sight of God. As works, they may be all



right and necessary—they may be highly proper and commendable—they may be things that no disciple of Jesus could dispense with; yet if they are not prompted by that love which is actuated by faith in the glad tidings of the grace of God, they are nothing better than the wild flowers that grow over the tombs of the dead.

Supposing, then, that this is your position, what does your case prove? and what remedy does it show to be necessary? It indisputably shows that you have not really been believing the gospel. It does not show that saving faith is not the heartfelt belief of the saving truth; but that you have only been supposing yourself a believer, or at the most, that your faith has not been heartfelt, but that you have been holding the truth so lightly, so indifferently, that it has been no more to you than a mere mental theory or speculation, and, consequently, that the gospel has not been allowed to influence your affections. This, we say, must be the secret of your case; for it is morally impossible that the truth as it is in Jesus can be received into the human heart and kept there by faith, and not excite the soul with gratitude to God and love to man. You have only to ponder this statement for a little, dear reader, to prove its truth—ask yourself if you can really, from the heart, believe that God so loved you as to give up the Son of his love a ransom for you and your fellow-sinners, and not feel your affections inflamed with gratitude and love at the thought. Well, then, what is your remedy? Why, just to do what we have now suggested. Let the truth as it is in Jesus get possession of your heart. This is what is wanted to save you from that faith which is dead and useless. Listen to Rom. x. 8-10: 'The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart—that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt *believe in thine heart* that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for *with the heart* man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' Perchance you have thought it very unphilosophical in the apostle to say that *with the heart man believes*; but, dear friend, the want of philosophy has

been all on your side, for that faith which has not its seat in the heart—which goes no deeper than the mind, can no more save a perishing soul than the theory of digestion can satisfy a famishing prodigal. You see, then, dear reader, that you are not to suppose yourself a believer, or that your faith can be anything but dead unless the truth as it is in Jesus has an abiding in your heart.

There is another mistake which we cannot but notice here, it is the supposition that the works which flow from faith form in part the ground of the sinner's justification before God. The idea is based upon the words of James ii. 24, '*Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*' But if it is observed that the apostle's aim is to shew that faith alone is dead faith, it will be immediately seen that the part here ascribed to works in the sinner's justification, is simply that of confirmation, evidence, or proof—that is to say, it is by a man's works that we *see* that he is a justified person. O, then, sinner, seek not to be justified by works of righteousness which you have done, but by the mercy of God which he has shed on you abundantly through Jesus Christ.

### BELIEVING IN VAIN.

If, dear reader, you have any fear that your faith in the gospel may be in vain, please observe that there are only two supposable circumstances in which faith in it can be vain. 1st, If the gospel is false; and, 2nd, when, though it is not false, the person ceases to believe in it. Mark the words of the apostle, speaking of the gospel in 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2. By it, says he, '*Ye are saved if you keep in memory what I preached unto you ; unless ye have believed in vain.*' Here then are the two hypotheses to which we have alluded.

Let us then first notice the supposition of the believer's faith being vain, from the gospel being untrue. In doing this, we shall get at the meaning of the apostle's words—

'unless ye have believed in vain.' What does he mean by such words? He did not mean that the Corinthians might not have believed in the right way, or that there are right and wrong ways of believing; but simply that they were saved, unless that the gospel in which they were believing was false. In this case, we of course are aware that their faith would have been vain—could not have saved them. Observe now the facts of the case. Paul reminds the Corinthian converts that the gospel which he had preached to them, and which they had received, consisted in the facts that Christ had died for their sins, had been buried, and had risen again, according to the Scriptures. But the infidel doctrine, that there is no resurrection of the dead, had crept in among these converts—'Now,' says the apostle in verses 12-17, 'If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen, and if *Christ be not risen*, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if *Christ be not raised*, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.' This then, as every one must see, fully explains the hypothesis—'unless ye have believed in vain.' In this sense then, dear reader, your faith cannot be vain, for the gospel is the truth of God, and no cunningly devised fable. It is therefore impossible for you to be disappointed, trusting yourself to it. Jehovah has pledged himself, that he that believeth on his Son shall not be ashamed or confounded.

The only possibility, therefore, of your faith being vain, is in your ceasing to believe the gospel. The scriptures abound with warnings on this point. Take the following as examples:—1 Thes. iii. 5, 'I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.' 1 Tim. v. 12, 'Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.' Col. i. 21-23, 'You that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body

of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight; *if ye continue in the faith* grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.' It is yours then, dear reader, to rejoice that there is no possibility of your faith in the gospel suffering disappointment. But it is not less yours to see that you receive the good news—that you receive it fully, and hold it firmly. Remember the Saviour's parable of the sower in Matt. xiii. 18–30, 'See that the wicked one catch not away the word which is sown in your heart. See that you do not receive it with joy, and are anon offended. See that the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches do not choke the word; but see that you bear fruit abundantly, and you yourself endure to the end.'

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## IS THE GOSPEL TRUE?

ALL that is required to prove that the gospel is true is to shew in what it consists, and on what evidence its truth rests. The gospel consists in *the facts* of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Referring to it in 1 Cor. xv. 1–4, the apostle says—'I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that *Christ died* for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he *was buried*, and that he *rose again* the third day, according to the scriptures.' Having stated that the gospel consists in these three facts, we beg you, dear reader, to observe the import of the word *fact*. A fact is a deed, something done, something accomplished, something that has actually taken place. Such is the gospel. It is not, as many suppose, a mere speculative system or set of abstract opinions; but, as the apostle declares, it consists in the facts of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This being the declaration of one of the apostolic preachers, we, of course, accept it as a correct statement of what the gospel is. The question

then simply is—did these events really take place as affirmed? If it can be shown that they did, the whole case is proven.

Observe, then, the following items of proof that the facts of the gospel are true. 1. The facts affirmed were of public notoriety. 2. They took place in full day-light. 3. They were of a character patent to the senses of all. 4. All the authorities and people generally were implicated in them. 5. They took place at the capital of the country and at a season when thousands were present from every part of the civilized world. 6. The announcement of them was made by a sufficiently large number of witnesses. 7. The witnesses were men of credibility. 8. They proclaimed the facts publicly, and at the time and place where they transpired. 9. The testimony was believed in there and then. 10. The belief of it spread throughout the whole globe. 11. The parties declaring the facts put themselves completely within the power of those whom they charged with the murder of Jesus. 12. Their statements could have been most easily refuted had they been false. 13. There was every consideration calculated to lead the authorities and people to disprove the alleged facts had they been false. 14. They were neither disproven nor denied. 15. The proclaimers of them had everything to lose by the course they adopted, and had nothing in its favour except the truth of their declaration. 17. So convinced were they of the truth of the facts proclaimed, that they suffered the loss of all things in their propagation, not excepting life itself. 18. The statement of the facts has been perpetuated to the present hour, and that not only by tradition, but by declarations written by the first preachers, and public ordinances which were established at the transacting of the facts, and which have been observed perpetually since.

Here then, dear reader, are the witnesses with their testimony and evidence before us. Now suppose you ask whence they came, and how they got here? Suppose you trace them back step by step till they lead you to the time and scenes of which they testify. You find they cannot have arisen in the nineteenth century, for you find them

before you in the eighteenth. Nor can they have arisen then, for you find them in the seventeenth; nor then, for you find them in the sixteenth; and so on, till you reach Jerusalem on that day when Jesus died that you might live. Now, is it not an immense deal more difficult to believe that the gospel facts are false, than that they are true? Is it possible for any one who looks but at this one line of evidence to believe them untrue? Is it possible that facts could be more fully substantiated than those of the gospel are? Is there any evidence wanting to complete the proof? Is there anything that would render it more satisfactory? Is there any fact in history so well authenticated as are the facts of the gospel? No, there is no fact in all the world's history so completely surrounded with evidence.

Now, what objection is there that can affect the proof on which the gospel rests? or that can prove the gospel itself to be untrue? Is it possible that any subsequent event can render facts—things done—untrue? We beg you here, dear reader, particularly to observe, that the gospel, consisting as it does in facts, cannot be affected by any casuality or discovery whatever; for when a fact transpires, it is necessarily a fact for ever. Nothing that can happen afterwards can render it not a fact. Having been accomplished, it is for ever, and under all circumstances, irreversibly true. Now, dear reader, bear in mind what the gospel is, and say if there is any objection that you know of that can overturn it. Can any metaphysical opinion, any philosophical speculation, any scientific discovery, any indiscretion of friends, any effort of foes, destroy the past actualities of the gospel? Never! So long as a fact is something done, and so long as what is done must remain done, so must the gospel be true.

## IS THE GOSPEL TRUE TO ME?

ANXIOUS, sinful soul! ask you, did the Saviour die *for you*? Did the Lamb of God really shed his precious blood *for you*? Was he in truth delivered for *your* offences, and raised again for *your* justification? It is true, dear reader,—all true—as true to you as it was to Peter, or John, or Paul. How shall we assure you of this? What evidence will satisfy you? What more evidence do you wish than any man can have—the Word of God? What more can you desire than it? Would a midnight dream, or voice, or vision, or the testimony of ten thousand angels, be more satisfactory than the explicit statements of God himself? Impossible! Well, you have this latter.

We suppose that you are satisfied that the gospel is true in itself—all that you wish to know is whether it is true to you. Now, then, hear the Saviour in giving his commission, Mark xvi. 15, ‘Go ye into *all the world*, and preach *the gospel* to *every creature*.’ Say, now, does this not include you? is the preacher not bound to preach the gospel to you? But can he preach to you that Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures, if it is not true to you? No. Well, then, the gospel must be true to you. But notice further, that this is fully according to the Scriptures: John iii. 16 says, ‘God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Thus if you are of *the world*, God loves you, and gave his Son for you; and *whosoever* you are, if you believe, you have life. Are you not included in ‘the world,’ and in this ‘*whosoever*’? Again, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15 says, ‘If one died *for all*, then were *all dead*; and *he died for all*, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again.’ If, dear reader, you are one of the all who are dead in trespasses and sins, Jesus died for you. This you are; so you cannot exclude yourself here. Again, 1 Tim. ii. 4–6, says, ‘God will have all men to be

saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth; for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.' Here you see that Jesus is Mediator for you, and that he gave himself a ransom for you. Again, Heb. ii. 9, 'That he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.' Once more is the gospel net thrown around you. But again, 1 John ii. 2, 'And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' Here you are told, that just as the Saviour was the satisfaction for the sins of the apostle and those to whom he wrote, is he the satisfaction for the sins of all besides—and therefore for yours.

Say, reader, if these scriptures do not prove to you that the Saviour died for you. If they do not, what language would prove it? You know that you can name nothing that could more satisfactorily demonstrate the glorious fact that Jesus died for you. You must acknowledge that if he did not, these scriptures deceive you; but as they cannot deceive you, they prove beyond the shadow of a doubt, that that blood which cleanseth from all sin, was freely shed for you. O then, sinner, behold the love of your God shining upon you in Jesus. Behold his precious blood being poured out for you, just as if you were the only sinner for whose sins it had to be given.

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### CHRIST DIED FOR ME IF I BELIEVE.

WE have to assure you, dear reader, that the Redeemer died for you whether you believe or not. The fact that he died for you is not contingent on your faith; but your faith must rest on the fact, that he did die for you. If you but think of it for a little, you must see that if he died for you at all, he must have done so whether you believe it or not. If he died, it is true that he did so independent altogether of the faith of those for whom he died. Your



believing cannot alter the fact which took place more than eighteen centuries ago. If it be true, it is true independent of your believing it; and if it be not true that he died for you—that is, true in itself as a matter of historical fact—your believing that it is true cannot make it so. You know very well that you believe a thing, *not to make that thing true*, but because *it is true*. Your believing that it is true cannot possibly render it true if it be not really true in itself; and if it be true in itself, it is so, whether you believe it or not. So is it with the gospel. The gospel comes as God's message of love to you and says, 'Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures.' It does not say, Christ died for your sins if you believe; but it says, Christ died for your sins—*therefore* believe. You are to believe it *because it is true*—and *not to make it true*. If it were not true God would not require you to believe it; for he cannot require his creatures to believe a lie. The very fact, therefore, that God requires you to believe the gospel, is sufficient evidence that the gospel is true in itself—that you are to believe it because it is true, and not to make it true; and therefore, instead of saying, Christ died for me if I believe, you should say, Christ died for me; *therefore* I believe.

You will see this more clearly perhaps by the aid of the following passage of Scripture:—In Rom. v. 6-8 we read, 'When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died *for the ungodly*; for scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us, in that *while we were yet sinners Christ died for us*.' Here you observe that the apostle affirms that the love of God extends toward men, and that the Saviour died for men not as believers, not as righteous, not as good; but while without strength, while ungodly, and while sinners. Here, indeed, is the glory of the gospel, that it comes to us in all our weakness and sinfulness, and announces to us the glorious fact, that in the midst of all our helplessness and wickedness, God loved us and sent his Beloved to die for us. See, then, dear reader, that the truth of the gospel does not hang on your faith, or on any thing in you at all.

See that it is true in itself, and confide in it just because it is true, and is therefore worthy of your faith. See that, unbeliever and sinner as you are, it is true to you and is intended for you.

The effect of the idea that the Saviour died for you, only if you believe, is to make you fix your mind on itself instead of 'looking to Jesus.' Under this idea the mind naturally falls back upon itself, always seeking for faith, trying to believe, and aiming rather at having faith in its faith than having faith in Jesus. Thus you are led insensibly away from the gospel to seek peace where it cannot be found. Do not, then, dear reader, put this or any *if* whatever between you and the Saviour; for just as the smallest splinter in the eye will dim its vision, and hide from it objects it would otherwise see; so, if you interpose any thing between your soul and the soul-saving truth, that sinner as you are, Jesus died for you, you prevent yourself from beholding the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. Now, then, O sinner, believingly adopt the language of faith and say, God commendeth his love toward me, in that while yet a sinner Christ died for me.

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## SEEKING AN INTEREST IN CHRIST.

WHY do you suppose, dear reader, that you require to *seek* an interest in Jesus? Do you not see that God *has given* you an interest in him? What greater interest do you want than that he died for you? Can you possibly have a greater interest than this? Impossible. Now, this interest the Bible declares you have. From the various passages quoted in the preceding papers, we may well address you in the language of 2 Cor. viii. 9, '*Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*' Do you not know this, dear reader? Is it not made known to you that Jesus loved

you and gave himself for you? Do you not believe that God set him forth a propitiation for your sins? Do you not believe that he was delivered for your offences and raised again for your justification? Then, if you do believe these glad tidings, what more do you want? What deeper interest can you have in the Lord Jesus than that he laid down his life for you? If his having done so does not give you an interest in him, what will or can do it? But if you do not believe that Jesus died for your sins according to the scriptures, what interest can you possibly get in him now? If he did not die for you, nothing can give you an interest in him? But since, by the grace of God, he did taste death for you, you have already an interest in him—a saving interest—just the interest you need.

What is wanted, dear reader, is not that you *seek* an interest in Christ, but that you *avail* yourself of the interest which God in his love has given you. O, do not deceive yourself! Do not seek what is already given you. You are mistaking altogether what the gospel requires you to believe. It does not require you to believe that God will come to terms, but that he has come to terms. It does not require you to believe that God will do a saving work for you, but that he has done it. It does not require you to believe that God will give you an interest in that work, but that he has given it. O sinner, listen to Jesus as he died on Calvary's cross, and cried, '*It is finished.*' By faith in that finished, saving work, avail yourself of that interest which God has given you in Christ, when he sent him so to bleed, and suffer, and die for you.

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### WHY ARE ALL NOT SAVED?

THIS question is asked by two classes of inquirers—*first*, by those who think that if God wished all men to be saved none would be lost, and consequently that the reason why

all men are not converted, is because of God withholding from them something that is necessary to their conversion; *second*, by those who suppose that if Christ really died for all, all must be saved. In regard, then, to these difficulties, observe, dear reader, *1st*, That the Bible expressly declares that it is God's desire that all men be saved, and that Christ died for all. 2 Pet. iii. 9 says, 'God is *not willing that any should perish*, but that all should come to repentance;' 1 Tim. ii. 4-6 says, 'God *will have all men to be saved*, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth, for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, *who gave himself a ransom for all.*' Thus it is quite certain, that the Bible gives no room for doubting whether God wills all to be saved, and whether Jesus died for all or not. Observe, *2nd*, That the Bible, so far from ascribing the non-conversion or the non-salvation of the sinner to the will of God, to his withholding any necessary aid, or to Christ not having died for him, it affirms the very opposite—it throws the entire blame on the sinner himself, and shows that the reason why he is not converted is, because he refuses to believe the gospel and will not come unto the Saviour. Mark the following passages, dear reader. If you wish to know why some men are converted and others are not, turn to Heb. iv. 2: 'Unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them, but the word preached did not profit them, *not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*' If you wish to know why all men are not saved, hear the Saviour's reason in John v. 40: '*Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.*'

Now it will be said—If this be correct, then, man succeeds in defeating the purposes of the Omnipotent. We answer, no; for while it is God's first aim to save the sinner, and so make him a monument of divine mercy, it is not less a part of God's purpose to render those who reject his salvation the monuments of his retribution and power. It is no proof that the rebel is stronger than the monarch that he succeeds in rebelling, else all men in having rebelled against God by sin must be stronger than God. If, however, the rebel were ultimately to succeed

in his rebellion, then he would prove himself the stronger; but in this the sinner shall not succeed, for God declares in 2 Pet. ii. 1, that those who deny the Lord who bought them, shall bring upon themselves swift destruction. Again, it will be said—If Christ died for all, and all are not saved, then he has died in vain. We answer, no; for though no sinner had been saved by the Saviour's death, God's glory alike in his grace and justice would still have been manifested to the entire universe, and this alone is no unimportant part of the divine purpose. But besides, it cannot be said that Jesus has died in vain, though some refuse his mediation, any more than it can be said that God gives his corn in vain because some perish of hunger. But again, some will say—Then, since the turning point is with man, is man after all not his own saviour. We answer, no; for his submitting to God to save him no more makes him his own saviour, than the drowning man who grasps the friend who leapt into the sea to save him is his own saviour. No man in his senses would say he was, but every one would say he was his own murderer if he kept himself off from his generous benefactor.

See, then, O sinner, your true position. Remember that should you not be saved you shall not have the satisfaction that you could not have been saved—that God willed you to die—that the Saviour did not die for you—or that the Spirit did not strive with you. No, you shall know when in hell that you are there only by your own wicked madness in contemning the love of God.

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### I AM TOO GREAT A SINNER.

THERE are very few who see themselves to be such sinners as God does. With his omniscient eye he pierces into the darkest recesses of the heart, and takes cognizance of all its unhallowed motives and desires; and these, with all the sins that flow from them, he beholds in the terrible

contrast of his own pure and perfect holiness. Yet most marvellous of all is it that just such a sinner as God beholds you, his heart is full of compassion toward you, appearing as if the depths of your sinfulness had only made him compassionate you the more. No man can think himself a greater sinner than he really is; yet no man, however great a sinner, is too great a sinner to be the object of the love of God, or to be saved by his Son. No man was ever lost because of the greatness of his sins, for however great they may have been, 'the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin.' No sins, however deep in dye, are too deep for the blood of Jesus to wash away. Though you, dear reader, are the chief of sinners, yet the blood of the Redeemer is all-available and efficacious for you. Look at Paul. Hear his confession in 1 Tim. i. 15, 16: 'It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' O, but you say Paul was a chosen vessel. But for what was he chosen? He himself tells us. 'Howbeit,' says he, 'for this cause, I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering for a pattern to those who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.' Here then, the blaspheming, persecuting, ringleader Saul is set before you and all sinners in all time coming an example of the willingness of God and the power of Jesus to save. Suppose that a rebellion rises in a kingdom, and one of its ringleaders is taken, and instead of being put to death, the gracious sovereign bestows upon him a free pardon, and gives him a commission to preach forgiveness to all the rebels, would it not be a triumphant argument for him to be able to say—'Here I am, a ringleader among you, saved by the clemency of our gracious sovereign, and that for the express purpose of shewing to all of you his anxiety and ability to save you one and all.' What could any of the rebels have to say after that? Would it be any argument against any one obtaining pardon, that he was a great rebel? None at all. Neither, dear reader, is it any argument against your obtaining mercy that you are a great sinner. Consider yourself to be the greatest of sinners, and still you

are not too great a sinner to be saved by the all-atoning blood of the Lamb of God which has been shed for you.

But more than this, if you really feel yourself to be so great a sinner, this is only another argument why you should throw yourself into the arms of him who is able to save you to the uttermost, for your damnation must be all the more terrible that your sins have been so great. You have only all the more need of such a Saviour as Jesus. Suppose, then, that you are the greatest of sinners, the fact that there is forgiveness for you should only lead you to love him the more who does forgive you. Hear the Redeemer himself on this very point, in Luke vii. 39-48. Here you have two debtors, one owing fifty and the other five hundred pence. But for both there was forgiveness—frank, free forgiveness. Only it was expected that the one who had the most forgiven would love the most. O, then, sinner, appropriate this glorious doctrine to yourself by faith in the Redeemer, and then shall it be true of you that your sins which are many are forgiven you. Then shall God say to you—Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.

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### AM I SAFE IN TRUSTING TO JESUS.

If, dear reader, you have any hesitancy in committing your soul to Jesus—if you have any thought that you may not be safe in doing so, you must be overlooking some part or other of the gospel testimony. Consider that the Saviour on whom the gospel calls you to rely is a divine Redeemer—consider that his righteousness is no less than the righteousness of God—consider that his sacrifice is infinite in value—consider that the saving work is a finished and a perfect work—consider that Jehovah has declared himself satisfied with it as the ground of your justification and acceptance—consider that the testimony on which your faith rests is that of the Spirit

of the living God—consider that God has raised Jesus from the dead, given him glory at his own right hand, and committed the judgment of the world to him, all in proof of his perfect satisfaction in that great work accomplished for you in common with mankind. Now, can you take all these things into consideration, and have any doubt as to your safety in fleeing for refuge to the hope set before you in the gospel? We do not see how you **can**—we do not see how any one can fully believe the truth as it is in Jesus, and not feel persuaded of his safety. Allow us to put the matter to you, dear reader—Suppose that you were this moment to be called before your Judge; you appear, and you plead what? You plead that you are a sinner, and that you have nothing of your own to offer in justification, but that the righteousness of that Jesus who died for you is your only hope. Now, would the Saviour deny himself? 2 Tim. ii. 13 says, '*He cannot deny himself.*' You surely see, then, that it is impossible for you to be unsafe in trusting in Jesus. Say, what can render you unsafe? Why should you imagine that you can be in danger in trusting to the merits of Christ. It is, in short, a contradiction in terms for any one to doubt his safety, and yet be believing in Jesus. Pray, what can he be believing? He cannot be believing the various articles of gospel truth which we have just suggested, and still remain in doubt of safety. Look at them, dear reader, one by one—ask yourself if you believe them; and if you do, then ask yourself if you really can suppose yourself unsafe in trusting to the work of that Redeemer who is himself to be your Judge. O reader, remember that you must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Remember, that if you deny him he also will deny you, but that if you accept him he will accept you; nay, more, he cannot reject you but by denying himself, and this you know is impossible. See, then, dear reader, your perfect safety in relying on Christ as your Saviour. See that so long as he remains seated on the throne of the universe, you are infinitely secure in committing your soul to him.



## NO ONE CAN BE SURE.

You think, dear reader, that no one can be sure that his sins are forgiven—that no one can be sure that he is saved—that no one can be sure of heaven. But why do you think so? Is this a scriptural thought? It is not. And this we can very easily show you. If no one can be sure, why does Acts xiii. 34 take up the words of Isa. lv. 3, and say, 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.' Was David not sure? Did he not say—'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever?' And in proof that these sure mercies are given to the disciples of Jesus, did Paul not say to the Corinthian converts,—'*We know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' 'Therefore we are *always confident*, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.' 'We are *confident*, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord?' And did John not say to the believers to whom he wrote—'*We know* that we have passed from death unto life?' And again, 'I write unto you little children because your sins *are* forgiven you?' Now, have we not in all these passages the language of perfect certainty? Most distinctly we have. There is no doubt, no perchance, no hesitancy expressed in them whatever. Both the writers and those written to are by these statements most distinctly declared to have been sure that their sins were blotted out, that their souls were saved, and that heaven was their eternal home.

Now, dear reader, do not try to persuade yourself that this may be the case with eminent christians such as Paul and John; but not with disciples of humble attainments. You must not overlook the fact, that the words we have quoted were addressed not to eminent Christians, but to true disciples of every degree of standing. It is as false to suppose that none but eminent Christians can

attain to the confidence that their sins are forgiven, that they have passed from death to life, and that heaven is theirs, as it is to suppose that no one can be sure. The passages quoted, if their words have any meaning at all, prove that all can be sure, and that all those written to were sure.

Independent of these passages, confidence of safety is inseparable from the intelligent belief of the gospel; and the faith of the individual who is not sure is in some respect defective or beclouded. Let us ask you, dear reader, if it is really possible for you intelligently to believe that the Son of the Highest died for your sins according to the scriptures, that God is satisfied with what his Son has done for you as a sinner, and declares that on your committing yourself by faith to Jesus, as your Saviour, he cancels every charge against you—is it possible, we ask, for you to believe this gospel, and not be sure of your personal salvation? It is not possible, dear reader, for you to believe all this and yet remain in doubt or fear; if you are not sure, it is certain you are discrediting some part of the gospel testimony, or that some error is lurking in your mind. Go over the testimony, then, and see if this be not your case. Put it to yourself if you really believe that Jesus died for you, that God is satisfied with him as your Saviour, and declares that on your believing him your sins are cancelled; and if you find that you do, ask what it is that should make you doubt your security.

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### A CHRISTIAN WITHOUT KNOWING IT.

It is a dangerous mistake, dear reader, for you to suppose that you can be a Christian without knowing it. If you entertain any such idea, you altogether misapprehend what it is to be a Christian. Is a Christian not one who knows, and knowing believes in, and believing in, loves, and loving, obeys the Lord Jesus Christ? Is not

Christianity in every feature of it a thing of experience? It is; and a man cannot be a Christian without experiencing what it is to be one. How, then, is it possible for one to experience what it is to be a Christian, and yet not know that he is one? Experience necessarily implies knowledge, for where is there experience without it? But that no one can be a Christian without knowing it, appears still more evident when we look at the various items of christian experience separately. The first article in that experience is knowledge. Knowledge is, in fact, the very basis of christian experience. 'This is life eternal,' said the Saviour addressing the Father, 'that they might *know* thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' It is in view of this that the entire system of revelation proceeds. The very idea of divine revelation presupposes the necessity of knowledge, for if it may be dispensed with, why a revelation! The very first thing contemplated in a revelation from God is to make known all that requires to be known by us, both concerning God and ourselves. That same revelation which makes God known to man, says to man, 'Man, know thyself.' From that knowledge of which the Saviour speaks, all that is comprehended in christian experience proceeds, for he ascribes to it the sum of the whole—namely, life eternal. The Bible order of things is, that knowledge leads to faith, faith to love, and love to obedience. So both the Saviour and his apostles, in dealing with the ignorant, sought to instruct them; having communicated instruction they required faith; having produced faith they next inculcated love; and from all who professed love, they demanded obedience. Now, is it possible that we can have knowledge without knowing it? that we can believe any important truth without knowing it? that we can love any one in particular without knowing it? or that we can heartily obey any one without knowing it? The very idea is absurd. Thus, although the scriptures had said nothing about the disciple knowing himself to be a Christian, common sense would settle the question by proving that he must know it. But hear the scriptures. In 2 Tim. i. 12, we have

Paul's testimony, '*I know,*' says he, 'whom I have believed, *and am persuaded* that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' In John xiv. 20, we have the Saviour's; '*Ye shall know* that I am in my Father,' said he to his disciples, '*and ye in me, and I in you.*' And in 1 John v. 13, we have John's; 'These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may *know that ye have eternal life.*' Here are three passages all declaring the same truth—first, regarding the apostle Paul; then, regarding all the disciples addressed by the Saviour; and then, regarding all the believers to whom John wrote.

If, then, dear reader, you do not know that you are a Christian, it is certain you are not one. Your only safety lies in at once directing your mind to the gospel, that you may come unto the knowledge of the truth and be saved.

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### IS IT NOT PRESUMPTION?

WHEN we contemplate the relative positions of God and man—the former as the great, eternal, self-existent Jehovah, the creator, preserver, governor, and judge of the entire creation, and the latter as an entirely dependent, helpless, impotent, and, above all, a sinful creature; it is an overwhelming thought that any man should be found expressing enjoyment of the most ineffable peace with the glorious Jehovah; confidently addressing him as Father, and not less confidently looking forward to the divine abode as his everlasting dwelling-place. It is a conception too sublime, and too much beyond anything that could have suggested itself to the human mind as at all probable, not to appear to every one ignorant of the secret of it a thing of great presumption. If, then, dear reader, it appears so to you, allow us to show you that this exquisitely delightful state is nothing more than the native result of faith in the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

Here is a sinner expressing himself as having perfect peace with God, an unshaken assurance that his sins are all forgiven; and that if he were this hour to die, he would depart in full and joyful confidence of an unqualified welcome to the presence and abode of Jehovah. Now this does look like presumption; but see on what this blessed assurance rests. Is it anything in the individual himself? Is it his own character, righteousness, goodness, feelings, works, or anything of his own at all that forms the ground of this peace, and joy, and hope? If it were, it would certainly be presumptuous in him to have such expectations. But instead of finding anything in himself, be what it may, to give him this perfect peace, he regards himself as most unworthy in the sight of God, and is ever ready from the heart to acknowledge, that if his peace with God depended on his own merits he would sink into utter despair. What is it, then, that gives him peace? Nothing else than a simple, firm, unshaken faith in the fact that God loves him, and that Jesus died for his sins as the word of God declares. This is the secret of it all. He has believed the love which God bears to him, and the manifestation of that love which the gift and death of Jesus as a sacrifice for his sins give him; and believing this, sinner as he is, he is filled with peace, and joy, and hope in believing.

Now, how can it be otherwise? Though Isa. xxvi. 3 had not said, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee;' though the Saviour had not said to his disciples, 'My peace I give unto you;' though Rom. v. i. had not said, 'Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;' though the scriptures had said nothing at all about the believer in Jesus having peace with God through the peace-speaking blood of the cross; yet this peace must have appeared as certain a consequence of faith in the gospel as salvation itself. We cannot conceive how an individual can really believe that God loves him—so loves him as to have surrendered the Son of his love unto death on his account, and that Jesus died as a satisfaction for his sins, and has been accepted by God as

such, and yet believing all this has not peace with God. Say, dear reader, if you think it possible that any one can scripturally and intelligently believe the truth as it is in Jesus, and not have perfect peace with God? Test your own faith by this rule. What but your sin has separated between you and your God? Well, then, if you believe that notwithstanding your sins God loves you, that Jesus died for your sins, and that God is satisfied with the sacrifice he has offered for them; how have you not peace with Jehovah? how can you fear to die? how are you not sure of heaven? If you have not peace, if you are afraid to die, if you are not sure of heaven, is it not positive proof that you are not really and fully believing the gospel? It is. And do you not see, dear reader, that so far from it being presumption for the sinner to believe God's good news, or to express entire confidence in the belief thereof, that it is the person who dares to disbelieve Jehovah's testimony, and doubts the safety of the believer, that is really presumptuous. Rom. iv. 20 says, that the strength of Abraham's faith was glorifying to God; and we know that in every case the doubting of testimony is dishonouring to the witness. O then, sinner, be strong in faith, and like Abraham of old, give glory to God.

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### IT IS TOO EASY A WAY.

THE thought that such a sinful creature as man is in a moment introduced into the enjoyment of peace with God, and that without any meritorious works on his part, but simply by apprehending the truth as it is in Jesus, leads many, from the marvellous simplicity of the means, to conclude that it is too easy a way to be saved. If, dear reader, you have come to this conclusion, we beg you to consider that this easy way is God's plan—that all the resources of the Godhead have been brought into operation to render it thus easy—that its very simplicity the more

illustriously exhibits the wisdom, power, and grace of God—that all the difficulties have been undertaken, solved, and vanquished by God, expressly in order to render the plan an easy one for those whose circumstances no other plan would suit. Have you not, dear reader, been forgetting all this? Have you not been overlooking all the difficulties that have been overcome, that the plan might be rendered thus easy for you? Ah, sinner, it was no easy work that Jesus accomplished for you! Who but he could have done it? It is indeed easy for you to believe the word of that God who cannot lie, and believing that word, to live; but does it follow that it was easy thus to prepare the way of salvation, so that you have but to walk in it? Ah, no! And, sinner, if you think that an immediate salvation by faith in Christ Jesus is too easy a way, we entreat you to behold what Jesus has suffered and done, and no longer will you call it too easy a way. To you verily the yoke is easy and the burden is light, but was it not a crushing, a terrible, and a death weight to the Redeemer? Was it an easy matter for him to bear a world's sins? Was it an easy matter for him to bear no more than your own? Behold him, O sinner, with all the mighty resources of his divinity, stricken to the ground under the fearful and mighty load. Hear him in the solitariness of his anticipated sufferings exclaim, 'O Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me!' Hear him cry, under the judicial hiding of his Father's face—'My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me!' O, behold the terrific ordeal through which the blessed Redeemer had to pass before he could say, 'It is finished;' and no longer will you say that the way is too easy. O remember, that though it is easy for you, it was not so to Jesus; and therefore that the fact that it is easy to you, is the very highest commendation it could have. Say, dear reader, if it had not thus been rendered easy for you by the humiliation, obedience, suffering, and death of the Messiah, what would you, or what could you have done? Ah, you forget that God in his love has opened up to you this easy way, just because no other way could have met your case. See, then, O sinner, that this way is not too easy.

## LOOKING FOR EVIDENCES.

**THERE** are some inquirers whose entire anxiety is to know that they possess the evidences of conversion. They allow this to occupy all their thoughts, and the result, in many cases, is, that they lose sight of the Saviour; and if they have for a while enjoyed that peace which flows from believing, they allow it to slip, and they are left in greater perplexity than that which they were in previous to getting the glimpse which they had of the saving truth. Observe, then, dear reader, we do not say that it is wrong for you to seek evidence of your conversion to God—or that it is wrong for you to expect, that when you come to know the truth, that your spirit shall bear witness conjointly with the divine Spirit that you are a child of God—or that you ought not to examine yourself, to know whether you are in the faith. But what we say is, that you must be careful never to withdraw your mind from Jesus—never to cease beholding him as the Lamb of God, who has borne your sins away—never to forget that he is your peace. ‘Looking unto Jesus,’ must be your motto and your practice; nay more, this must be the very habit of your mind, if you wish uninterrupted peace with God, and the continued assurance of your acceptance in the Beloved. Remember you are not to look into your heart, nor into yourself at all, in order to get peace. It is not in your heart nor in yourself that you have peace with God; it is in and through the Lord your righteousness. You must remember that peace with conscience is another thing from peace with God. The latter flows only through Jesus; the former arises from the knowledge of your being in and doing the right. That is, you get peace with God by the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus; while you get peace with conscience by the knowledge that the truth is abiding and operating in yourself. Or again, the knowledge that Jesus has finished the saving work for you, gives you peace with God; while the knowledge that



you are acting out the requirements of the gospel, gives you peace with your conscience. Or, in other words still, when you are believing in Jesus, the fear caused by your sins departs; and when you are following the will of God, as a disciple of his Son, your heart does not condemn you—you have the answer of a good conscience toward God. We make these remarks, not because it is necessary for you to be able to define the exact difference between peace with God and peace with conscience, but to warn you against the mistake of looking into your own mind to get peace with God, instead of looking out to him whose blood alone speaks peace to the troubled soul of man. Suppose a sinner, conscious of his guilt, and anxious for peace to his burdened spirit, in view of God, death, judgment, and eternity. How is he to get it? Not by looking within himself, for there is nothing in himself but what gives him occasion of fear. What then is he to do? He is to behold the sin-bearing Lamb of God, for he is the sinner's peace; and it is only by 'looking unto Jesus,' that peace with God can be either obtained or retained. But suppose again, that this individual retains so slight a hold of the gospel, that he either lets it slip altogether, or it bears no power over his affections and actions, and he consequently lives in disobedience to the known requirements of God. What then? Why, any one may see that that individual cannot have a conscience void of offence. Both his heart and the word of God condemn him. What, then, is he to do? Evidently he must keep the truth of the atonement so closely to heart, that it shall bear its blessed sway over all his thoughts, and feelings, and actions. Then is fulfilled in him the saying of Rom. viii. 16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God;' and also of 1 John i. 7, 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.' O, then, sinner, if you would have the evidence of sonship to God, walk in the light which he has given you in Jesus, both as your sacrifice and example—your Saviour and Lord.

## BUT I AM SO TEMPTED.

THE finest sensibilities of the mind are awakened as the saving truth dawns upon it. And then, things which under ordinary circumstances would not have caused a passing thought, give impressions that are both deeply and keenly felt. At this crisis the adversary appears to take every possible advantage, by suggesting in quick succession to the over sensitive mind of the awakened sinner every species of evil thoughts. If, dear reader, you have experienced any of his devices in this respect, it will be comforting for you to bear in mind, that temptation in itself is not necessarily sinful. It is so only when the individual is his own tempter—'when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.' Jesus himself 'was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' Temptation is common to all, and especially to those whose mind is under the awakening influence of the Spirit and truth of God. You are, therefore, not to regard the mere fact of temptation as peculiar to your case, or as ominous of evil. The words of 1 Cor. x. 13 are as true to you as to those to whom they were at first addressed. 'There hath no temptation fallen you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.' These facts, then, teach you to stand prepared for the assaults of the enemy—narrowly to watch your own heart, and discourage the rise of sinful thoughts; but above all, to keep the more closely to the Saviour, who, having been himself tempted, is able to succour those who are. Yes, dear reader, here your safety lies. 'Seeing we have a great high Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession; for we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' Jesus is your strength and help. All that you are subject to he knows of, and in every temptation he sympathises

with you. He underwent infinitely more than you can ever have to bear. Look then to him as an older, an experienced and a successful traveller through the path of temptation; follow him as a sympathising friend and guide, and you cannot but conquer. With a *thus it is written*, he foiled the adversary in every attempt; and with the same all-potent weapon you too must conquer. In whatever way you should be assailed, betake yourself to the sword of the Spirit—the word of God. If the adversary suggest to you, that it is not likely that God cares for an unworthy sinner like you—point to Rom. v. 8, ‘God commendeth his love toward us, in that, *while yet sinners*, Christ died for us.’ If he tell you that God’s justice is inflexible—reply in the words of Rom. iii. 25, 26, that God has set forth his Son as a propitiation, that he might be *just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus*. And if, to throw you off your guard, he tells you that God will certainly keep you by his power—tell him, in the language of 1 Pet. i. 5, and Rom. i. 16, that God keeps through faith; and that the gospel is his power to save.

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### BUT IF I WALK UNWORTHILY OR DRAW BACK.

No doubt it is better not to take the christian name than to bear it unworthily, or at last to deny it. But the fear of so doing is no justification whatever of the non-reception or non-profession of the truth. For while it is most becoming to manifest that holy fear of disgracing the christian name which its own sacredness should ever inspire; yet it is altogether a mistake to suppose, that the apprehension of walking unworthily is an excuse for not entering the christian life at all. The objection under consideration rests on two grand mistakes. *First*, it is forgotten that it is equally sinful or condemnatory to deny the gospel by not professing it at all, as it is to profess it and not bear out the profession. Matt. x. 32, 33, gives the Saviour’s

testimony on this very point: 'Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven. But *whosoever* shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven.' Here the Saviour says, that *any one*—not merely the recusant, but *whosoever* that denies him on the earth, he shall deny in heaven. *Second*, it is forgotten that God pledges himself to give grace requisite to meet every present necessity. *Psa. lxxxiv. 11* says, 'The Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly.' Confirmatory of this, God's answer to Paul was simply—'My grace is sufficient for thee;' and the apostle's own confession was, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.'

We implore you, therefore, dear reader, not for a moment to allow the thought that you may walk unworthily of the gospel to hinder you from receiving it. Consider that this is to reject the Saviour, and to bring upon yourself certain damnation. Consider again, that you are not at present in a position to judge of the probabilities of your walking faithfully or the reverse. Consider that God promises to make all grace abound toward you—that he engages, that as your days are so your strength shall be; and, consequently, that it is quite erroneous for you to measure your capabilities of endurance and resistance when supported by the indwelling of the grace of God, the power of the holy Spirit, the love of Christ, and the hope of glory, by the weakness, doubts, fears, and faithlessness which characterise your present unbelieving state of mind. Therefore, dear reader, at once and for ever dismiss from your mind an objection so fatal to yourself and so faithless of God, and immediately surrender yourself to that Redeemer who bought you with his precious blood. We do not wish you to imagine that in following the Redeemer you shall have no self to deny—no cross to bear—no reproach to suffer—no temptation to resist—no foe to overcome—no pleasures to forego—no disappointment to surmount—no sorrow to repress. For in following such a leader as Jesus in such a world as this, these things must be expected; but we do wish you to know

distinctly, that in committing yourself to the discipleship of Christ you shall most certainly experience that grace which will enable you to exclaim with the apostle—'In all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.'

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### ONCE IN CHRIST ALWAYS IN CHRIST.

THE supposition of being always in Christ if once or at all, is allowed by some to operate in a fearfully dangerous manner. They think that they are safe if they can by any means convince themselves that they have been at any past period, or that they shall be in any period to come in Christ. Under this impression they become stoically indifferent to all the facts, appeals, requirements, and sanctions of the gospel. We entreat you, dear reader, as you value your eternal interests, to guard against any such fatal delusion. We entreat you to consider, that you have line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, declaring to you that you must continue faithful unto death, if you would be finally saved. Do you suppose that your faith of yesterday will serve to-day or to-morrow? Does not Heb. x. 38, 39, say, 'The just shall *live by faith*, but if *he draw back* my soul shall have no pleasure in him; but we are not of them who *draw back unto* perdition, but of them that *believe to the saving of the soul*.' Again, what said Jesus to the disciples according to John xv. 1-7, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that *abideth in me* and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing.' 'If a man *abide not in me* he is cast forth as a branch and is withered, and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.' 'If ye *abide in me and my words abide in you*, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.' These, with many other passages, intimate most clearly, that it is just as necessary

to continue to believe as it was to begin to believe, in order to be saved. There is no salvation in unbelief. But the reader may say, do not such passages as John x. 28, 29, and Phil. i. 6, intimate that the believer cannot fall away? We answer, that those and similar passages speak not of the fidelity of the believer, but of God's faithfulness. They speak of God performing his engagement inviolate. The first passage declares, that the sheep of Christ—those who hear his voice and follow him—shall never perish, that no one shall pluck them who thus hear and follow the good Shepherd out of his or his Father's hands. But it does not say that they themselves may not cease to hear and follow Christ, and so cease to be his sheep and those whom God engages to keep in safety. The second passage simply expresses the apostle's confidence that God would perform the good work which he had begun—that on his part there would be no defection. But as regards the Philippians, he beseeches them to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling—inspires them with the thought, that it is God's good pleasure to work in them, and that by their fidelity his own labour on their behalf would not be in vain. 'Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' O, reader, if you wish to be kept by the power of God, remember it must be through faith. 'He that continueth to the end shall be saved.' If you would that Jesus should see in you of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, look constantly to him, follow him whithersoever he goes, walk closely with him, think how terrible, if that dear Redeemer who for you poured out his soul unto death should at last have to say, My soul has no pleasure in you.

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## NO MORE SACRIFICE FOR SINS.

A FEARFULLY distressing thought sometimes enters the mind of those who, after having received the truth, allow

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it to slip. The idea to which we refer is, that their salvation has become utterly impossible. They suppose that the Bible teaches that the sacrifice of Jesus has become altogether unavailing to them, and that repentance on their part has become a thing that cannot take place. The passages on which these views are formed, are Hebrews vi. 4-8, and x. 26, 'For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.' 'For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.' If, dear reader, you have any difficulty in regard to these passages, observe—1st, That the impossibility spoken of is contingent, not absolute—that is, it depends entirely upon the position taken up by the individuals themselves. Mark the apostle's words—it is impossible to renew them to repentance, *seeing* they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh—*seeing* they openly expose him to shame. The apostle simply intimates, that while an individual is doing this, it is impossible to bring him to repentance. Mark, it is not said that the person cannot cease doing that which renders his renewal to repentance impossible; it is only said, that engaged in such a procedure he cannot possibly be renewed to repentance. The impossibility is altogether contingent upon the position assumed by the individual, and is not said to affect the individual's ability to cease occupying a position so fearful and dangerous. In various parts of scripture the idea of contingent impossibility is introduced. For example, Jer. xiii. 23 says, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.' That is, it is impossible for a person to persist in wrong, and at the same time do well. Again, Rom. viii. 7 says, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' The carnal mind is the minding of the flesh; this state of

mind is antagonistic to God, and it is impossible for the man who continues in it to be subject to that law which is pure and spiritual. The doctrine of these and similar passages is simply, that a man cannot do two opposites at once, nor can he, while persisting in the one, be turned to the other, because the very idea of repentance, conversion, or reformation, implies the leaving off the wrong as the first step in moving to the right. Now, dear reader, observe, *2nd*, That the words, 'no more sacrifice,' teach not that the great sacrifice offered by Jesus, once for all, has lost its efficacy or applicability; but that over and above it—besides it—in addition to it there is none, no further, no other, no more sacrifice for sins. The apostle's argument is, that the sacrifice of the Redeemer is God's only plan of mercy, and therefore, that the person who sins wilfully against it, despises, contemns, and rejects it, has nothing before him but 'a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.' The wilful sin of which he speaks is, as verse 29 proves, the deliberate, determined, trampling under foot of the divine Redeemer. Mark, it is nowhere said that the recusant may not turn again to the Lord. But of the likelihood of his doing so, how little hope is there? O then, dear reader, be cautioned against a traitor's part and a traitor's woe. Reflect upon the fearful contingencies of defection from Christ. Dread the very thought of it; see it as the most appalling to contemplate; behold it as the shortest, the steepest, the quickest, the surest path to the woes of the damned. O, be aware of the unparalleled danger of the first step in defection; consider that if you be in the recusant's career, how little can be done for you. Remember that in renouncing the gospel, God has no new scheme of mercy, and no new argument, or appeal, or persuasion, or means of salvation by which to save you; and that you, therefore, shut yourself up to the vengeance of insulted majesty, justice, and grace.

Be then, O sinner, entreated at once and for ever to cast yourself on that sacrifice, the merits of which no sinner ever believingly appealed to in vain. If you have by the slightest defection pierced anew that heart of love which



on Calvary poured forth its life blood for you, O let your treachery be only an additional argument why you should henceforth cling to Jesus with a fuller and more constant faith, and love him with a truer heart than hitherto.

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### THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

SOME enquirers greatly perplex themselves with the idea, that they may have committed that sin against the holy Spirit which the Redeemer declared should never be forgiven, or that for the forgiveness of which the apostle John affirmed no prayer should be offered. That there is the possibility of committing this most fearful of sins, and that many, many, alas, have committed it is too true to be either denied or overlooked. But while this solemn reflection should fill the mind with salutary care and dread, it is our delightful privilege to show the anxious sinner that as yet this awful sin is not his, and that the way is open by which he may safely escape the commission of it. We hope, then, dear reader, to show you that this sin is altogether peculiar, and that you may with confidence conclude that as yet it cannot apply to you, and that you are free to escape it for ever. In Matt. xii. 22-32, Mark iii. 22-30, Luke xi. 14-27, and xii. 10, we have the Saviour's allusions to it. The facts of the case are, that the Jews blasphemously ascribed the power by which the Redeemer wrought his miracles to Satan instead of God. This gave the Saviour occasion to tell them, that though they thus spoke against him it would be forgiven them, but if they should in like manner blaspheme the holy Spirit in his ministration, they should never be forgiven. It was God's gracious design to follow the ministry of his Son with that of the holy Spirit, as his final dispensation for the salvation of man. To this the Saviour often alluded, and in regard to this case his allusion may be paraphrased thus— I have come to you from God and have demonstrated my

mission by the power of God, but you have rejected me, and blasphemed that power as satanic by which my divine claims have been supported. Extreme, however, as this your crime is, it shall be forgiven you; for as an ultimate endeavour to save you, the holy Spirit will come and demonstrate further the truth of my claims, but if you reject and blaspheme his witness as you have mine, nothing more can possibly be done for you—the rejection of his ministration shall for ever seal your condemnation, and you shall never be forgiven. Now, dear reader, we think you must see that this sin consists in the wilful, continued, and final rejection and blaspheming of the holy Spirit's ministry and testimony—that in the words of 1 John v. 16, it 'is a sin unto death,' first, in being persisted in up to the hour of death; and second, in being a determined rejection of the divinely appointed source and way of life. And we also think that you must see, that as yet this sin is not yours; but that the only way to avoid its becoming chargeable against you, is for you now, ere your day of grace closes, to receive by faith the testimony of the holy Spirit which he has given you in his word concerning the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Reject this till the period of your probation closes, and your salvation is as impossible as that of those already in perdition. O remember, that you are now under the ultimate measure that God can adopt by which to save you, and that if you do not accept forgiveness as offered you in the testimony of the holy Spirit, you can never be forgiven. Before, dear reader, you persist in rejecting or trifling with the gospel of the grace of God, be prepared to solve the problem of Heb. ii. 3, —how shall you escape if you neglect the great salvation? While, then, O sinner, you are a prisoner of hope, flee to the refuge set before you in the gospel,

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### TOO LATE.

WHILE many sinners presume to defer the earnest consideration of the things which belong to their eternal peace,

under the false expectation either of making the most of both worlds, of undergoing death-bed repentance, or at any rate of somehow or other being saved at last; others are deeply anxious to know that they are not too late. One answer will serve all. Neither experience nor scripture warrants the presumptuous imagination of *future* conversion. The testimony of universal experience is, that the longer a sinner persists in neglecting the gospel, the more callous does he become to its truths—the longer he continues in sin, pleasure, and worldly engagements, the more firmly do they wrap themselves around him. Hence the remark of eminent preachers, that there are comparatively few conversions after the age of twenty-five. As for death-bed conversion among those who have long neglected the out-stretched arm of saving love, how solemnly rare is it. The body, prostrated with disease and pain, the mind enfeebled with age, or distracted with delirium, and the affections insensibly recurring to the objects around which they have long been entwined, who in his senses would call that a time for repentance, a time to prepare for meeting God? What then so truly describes that sinner's state as that of the foolish virgins of the Saviour's parable, roused at the solemn hour of midnight with the more solemn cry, *Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him!* they rise only to exclaim to the wise, *Give us of your oil for OUR LAMPS ARE GOING OUT,*—only to find when they go to buy that the bridegroom has come, that they that were ready have entered with him to the marriage, that the door is shut, while they are excluded, and the only answer to all their appeals is, *I never knew, acknowledged or approved you, ye workers of iniquity!* You see then, dear reader, that even in this life there is a time when the question of salvation is virtually lost, lost not because of the want of mercy, nor blood to cleanse, but from self incapacitation to receive it. Of the dying man, who, like the thief on the cross who has never before heard the gospel, there is hope, but he who wilfully defers the acceptance of mercy till the hour of death, what is he but courting the sentence, 'He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still.' O then,

sinner, it is only by your *now* receiving the grace of God—*now* in the hour of succour—*now* in the day of salvation—*now* while the truth is before you, and you have the power and opportunity to embrace it understandingly, believingly and heartily. It is only *now* that we can say—*It is NOT TOO LATE.*

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## CONCLUSION.

In the preceding papers, dear reader, we have endeavoured to remove the various hindrances to your enjoyment of peace with God. While it is not for us to say whether we have been successful in entirely removing each of the numerous obstacles, difficulties, and objections discussed; yet we do not think it is too much for us to conclude, that by the many portions of divine scripture quoted, we have at any rate succeeded in proving, not only in face of the objections to which we have referred, but in view of every conceivable objection that can enter your mind, that, sinner as you are, the love of God rests upon you—that it is his infinite desire to save you—that in order to your salvation the Son of his love has suffered and died a sacrifice for your sins—that on the sole ground of the finished work of Jesus you are welcome at this instant to enter the family of the redeemed—that God by the holy Spirit, the word, and the ministry, is beseeching you to be reconciled, to be at peace, to accept salvation and life eternal—that there is nothing whatever on God's part hindering in the slightest degree your immediate salvation—that, on the contrary, everything which God can wisely and righteously do to save you has been done—that now nothing is wanted but your acceptance of that free, full, present, and eternal salvation which Jehovah is thus entreating and praying you to take—that to do so you need no self-preparation of any description whatever; nothing, in fact, but to yield yourself by faith to the saving, pardoning, and purifying blood of Jesus—that on your thus unreservedly committing yourself to the Redeemer, the fear of your sins, the dread of death, the terror of the judgment,

and the apprehensions of eternity, which have hitherto held you in bondage, shall simultaneously depart; while the love of God, the peace of Jesus, the joy of the holy Spirit, the conviction of safety, and the hope of glory, shall fill your heart, animate your spirit, and gently constrain and regulate your affections, your will, and your conduct—that if you are not saved it is because of your own neglect and rejection of the salvation wrought out for you, offered to you, and pressed upon your acceptance by God—that there is no valid reason in the universe why you should not now accept the proffered salvation; but that every hour's delay renders your sins the greater, your heart the more callous to the love of God, your understanding the more blind to the truth, your conscience the more impervious to the gospel, your salvation the less likely, and your damnation the more certain and terrible—and that should the great catastrophe thus be yours, you shall not have the consolation that you could not help being lost; but your blood shall be upon your own head, and the terrific conviction shall never be effaced, that you are in hell for the one reason that you despised and resisted everything that the love, and wisdom, and power of Jehovah could do to save you.

O then, fellow-sinner, we implore you by every possible consideration—by the love of God, by the sacrifice of Jesus, by the pleadings of the holy Spirit, by the urgency of your case, by the value of your soul, by the multitude of your sins, by the terrors of the judgment, by the vengeance of heaven, by the swiftness of time, by the brittleness of life, by the certainty of death, by the duration of eternity, by the woes of the lost, by the claims of your kindred, by the blessedness of the saved—**now, where, and as you are, unhesitatingly and unreservedly to commit yourself to that Redeemer who freely shed his blood for you, and whose sacrifice shall never, never lose its power.**

THE END.

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BOUND  
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